Design Plan for the Sawmill Town History Wing at the Texas Forestry Museum

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DESIGN PLAN FOR THE SAWMILL TOWN HISTORY WING EXHIBIT AT
THE TEXAS FORESTRY MUSEUM

By

KENDALL GAY, Bachelor of Arts

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of
Stephen F. Austin State University

In Partial Fulfillment

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DESIGN PLAN FOR THE SAWMILL TOWN HISTORY WING EXHIBIT AT
THE TEXAS FORESTRY MUSEUM

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ABSTRACT

The Texas Forestry Museum in Lufkin, Texas is the only forestry museum in the state. It preserves artifacts and educates visitors about Texas’ forest industry history. The museum has a Sawmill Town History Wing that is outdated and in need of a refreshing exhibit design based on current best practices. Using a previous museum audit as a guide, the new exhibit will have better flow, panel aesthetics, content, and interactive elements. By creating a new exhibit, the museum is better able to educate and entertain the visitors about Texas’ forest industry history.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Finally, I want to thank my parents, Ricky and Kristi Gay. My dad took on projects in other parts of my life, which freed time for me to work on this thesis. My mom brought food, sent flowers, gave advice, and spent way too many hours keeping me company while I was working on this thesis. Any success I have is a reflection of my parents’ goodness and devotion to their children.
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INTRODUCTION

The Texas Forestry Museum is the only forestry museum in Texas.¹ The Texas Forestry Association and the Kiwanis Club of Lufkin partnered to start this organization in 1976. Since the first small building, the museum has expanded to include multiple exhibits, temperature controlled archives, and an outdoor trail. The Texas Forestry Museum preserves the history of an industry that has a large economic, environmental, and historical impact on the state by providing exhibits and programs that both educate and entertain its visitors. This thesis will focus on creating new exhibit design plan for the Sawmill Town History Wing at the Texas Forestry Museum.

¹ For the purpose of this thesis, forestry is defined as the science and practice of planting, managing, logging, selling, and caring for the forests.
The Texas Forestry Museum both educates and entertains its guests. Visitors learn about the variety of forest products in the *Money Trees* exhibit and explore how paper is made in the *Paper Mill Room*. Guests venture outside to see the W. T. Carter & Brothers locomotive, a log loader, a log car, and a caboose, which are displayed on a track next to a train depot moved from Camden, Texas. The largest artifact in the museum’s collection is the fire tower, which stands more than one hundred feet tall. The museum has many exhibits for children. Scavenger hunt boxes are set up around the museum to help engage and teach children about forest
history. There is also a toy train table and sawmill playhouse for kids to play with in the Children’s Wing. Visitors can walk the Urban Wildscape Trail to learn more about trees through twenty-eight trees identified with labels. The museum rotates temporary exhibits once or twice a year to interest returning guests. Past exhibits include *Art from the Ashes*, which displayed art created from wildfire debris; *Everything But the Kitchen Sink*, which showcased community-loaned pre-1950 kitchen gadgets; *Smokey Bear’s 70th Birthday*, which displayed 1940s-2014 memorabilia; and *Time, Space, and Place*, which showed pinecone photography from a local artist. In addition to exhibits, the museum is the home of the Texas Forestry Hall of Fame. Each year, the Texas Forestry Museum inducts a person who made a significant impact on the forest industry. Visitors can read a biography of accomplishments for each inductee. Many Hall of Fame members directly impacted the history presented in the museum’s Sawmill Town History Wing.
The History Wing presents the story of sawmill town work and life from the industry’s first boom in the late nineteenth century to its decline in the 1950s. Initially installed in the mid-1990s, the museum staff occasionally updated the exhibits with the last update of the sawmill doctor exhibit in 2014. However, the room largely remains the same as the first installation. This exhibit is an open-concept area where the visitors can see everything the room has to offer from its entrance. The first section to the left is titled “In the Woods” and describes how the loggers cut down the trees. There are two manual saws hanging on the wall and three large saw machines sitting on the floor.

The visitors then turn to the largest object in the room, a bright green steam engine manufactured circa 1900. When the Ogletree Family donated the steam engine, the museum built the history wing around the machine to accommodate its large size. The museum energized the steam engine with electricity so visitors can see how the machine worked.

The next section along the back wall is titled “Out of the Woods” and tells visitors how loggers transported the heavy logs from the woods to the mills by water, wagons, trains, and trucks. The largest area of this section is dominated by a red Martin Wagon, which was used for tracts too small for the construction of a logging railroad. There is also a looped documentary film about the sawmill town of Camden, Texas.
Moving to the right along the back wall, guests walk to the area titled, “In the Mill.” Several large objects take up space in this dark corner including a planer, which smoothed rough lumber and a lumber dolly used for transporting the boards. Guests read how the logs from the woods are transformed into different wood products like lumber and plywood. Nevertheless, the actual sawmill was not the only part of the mill; there were other jobs that helped keep the mill running like the blacksmith. There is a large blacksmith’s forge displayed with a dozen smaller tools the blacksmith used. Near this exhibit is a large saw sharpener and a “Flyball” or centrifugal governor, which regulated the speed of a machine.

“Everyday Life in a Mill Town” is the next section of the current History Wing. Here, guests learn about the sawmill workers and their families. Many sawmills developed company-owned towns, which had everything their residents could need including a commissary, a post office, and a doctor. The blacksmith not only did work for the company but also for the residents. There is a company store counter with a manual register and a display with an assortment of items people could buy in the company store. There is also a post office window and timekeeper’s desk with a payroll ledger. This area includes an exhibit on the sawmill doctor, which is about twenty years newer than the rest of the room. The panel design is different than all others and the artifacts are displayed in a doctor’s office setting instead of in

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2 For the purpose of this thesis, lumber is defined as wooden boards or logs sawn and cut for use.
display cases. The jewel of the display is a model of Manning, Texas, which was an early twentieth century sawmill town. Visitors can see how the town was laid out and how daily life intertwined with work life.

The History Wing is the focus of this thesis. It is a large room that packs in not only a great deal of information but also dozens of artifacts, many of them quite large. The museum installed the initial version of the sawmill history exhibits in the mid-1990s. The exhibits are outdated and need fresh ideas and designs. There are elements of the History Wing that will provide a good base. The chronology of the room is laid out well, and due to the number of large artifacts that cannot go anywhere else, the basic layout will stay the same. However, there are elements that can be fixed to make the History Wing a more enjoyable and informative experience for visitors. People need specific instructions about which way to start. The room makes much more sense if a visitor begins to the left rather than starting on the right. The panels offer few personal accounts or social history, and there are no captions on the dozens of photos in the room. Also, the room needs better lighting to read the text and appreciate the artifacts.

The Texas Forestry Museum has two temperature controlled archival rooms, and five additional storage areas. Although there is nothing specifically wrong with the artifacts currently on display, showcasing different items from the archives will bring new interests for the returning visitors. While the positive elements of the
exhibits will help as a starting point, there are many aspects that need to be changed.

In 2013, Erin McClelland conducted an audit of the museum. She reported that the time frame of the History Wing is too broad because it spans almost a century. She suggested a change in the structural flow of the room. This requires adding a wall at the entrance to force visitors to the left, then creating a new door as an exit to the Paper Mill Room. This change will create a better flow for the History Wing and the museum as a whole. McClelland also noted the emphasis in the text of the history of machines rather than how the workers used them. She advised that showing visitors how the technology relates to the workers would put a more human face on the history. McClelland’s observations and advice were taken into consideration when developing changes to the History Wing.

This thesis provides a plan for the redesign and reinstallation of exhibits in the Sawmill Town History Wing based on best practices developed since the original installation in the mid-1990s. The Wing’s time frame has been narrowed to practices and experiences from 1880 to 1930, which is the time period when the steam engine, displayed in the center of the room, was the prevailing technology. I

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3 Erin McClelland, “Report on the Texas Forestry Museum,” Museum & History Services, 2013. Due to a decline in visitation numbers, the Texas Forestry Museum hired Erin McClelland, a museum and history services consultant to perform an audit on the museum’s exhibits in 2013. McClelland recommended that more personal and participatory techniques will better connect visitors to the museum’s stories, while improved organization and design will make the space more pleasant to visit. The specific recommendations will be explained later in the thesis.
designed a plan for a change in the flow of visitors throughout the room, and based the layout of sub-exhibits off of the large artifacts already in the room that cannot move. I wrote new text to include titles, introductions, section labels, and captions according to best practices. I evaluated current photos and artifacts and installed new material; all photos and objects have descriptive captions. I wrote the text with a focus on the social history and included panels specifically about women’s roles and race relations, which were lacking in the old Sawmill Town History Wing. I included the text and installation instructions, as well as, the explanation and defense of my decisions based on a thorough understanding of best practices within curatorial, museum education, and broader public history literature.
OVERVIEW OF FOREST HISTORY

Before European colonists arrived, Native Americans lived on a densely forested continent. “The land area of the coterminous United States is 1,903 million acres... [and] about 45%, were covered originally by well-formed commercial forests, which made the forest the most important, and certainly the most visually dominant, vegetation on the continent.”¹ Nonetheless, logging did not draw the first European colonists to Virginia and Massachusetts in the early seventeenth century. They traveled across the Atlantic Ocean for religious freedom and trade opportunities but soon found a use for the forests. They cut down trees to create farmland, build houses, and burn firewood. Early settlers also exported clapboard initially cut with hand tools but later at sawmills. By the mid-seventeenth century, “saw-mills became as numerous as grist-mills in Virginia.”² Forest utilization and agriculture were connected, and many farmers worked as loggers during the winter. In the early days of logging, many sawmills were established near rivers or streams

to utilize the water for both power and transportation since traveling by land was difficult.

By the eighteenth century, the logging industry was progressing. In smaller sawmills, employees worked together but as sawmills grew larger, there was a separation and specialization of jobs. Loggers were the workers in the woods, and lumbermen were the businessmen. Also, crews of loggers replaced the individual effort.

During the eighteenth century, several changes propelled the logging industry. Large operations became commonplace. Rivers became crowded with logs from different companies using the same waterway. "The job was hazardous; logjams were dangerous, and drownings and crushings were common."³ Log driving was a dangerous job but water was the best mode of travel. Loggers gradually moved to the interior looking for more untouched forests. Although logging was already in operation in New York state, the completion of the Erie Canal in 1821 increased forestry activity in the western half of the state, as well as, paved the wave to the Midwest through the Great Lakes.

By the mid-nineteenth century, Michigan, Ohio, Illinois, Minnesota, and Wisconsin had established and effective logging industries. In 1850, "Ohio was producing 6.6 percent of the nation’s lumber."⁴ Transportation was key to logging

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³ Williams, _Americans and their Forests_, 171.
⁴ Cox, _The Lumberman’s Frontier_, 129.
success in the interior. Both the steamboat and the railroad affected the logging industry’s productivity. Previously, logs could only move downstream but the steam engine could push and pull them both up and down the river. According to Thomas R. Cox, author of The Lumberman’s Frontier, the railroads brought a revolution to the timber industry. “Railroads not only allowed year-round transportation of logs and opened stands well back from the waterways, but also changed basic logging practices.”

Often lumbermen used both rivers and railroads in conjunction with one another. By the mid-nineteenth century, Chicago became a major transportation center for both the Mississippi River and railroads. Logs traveled from remote northern forests by train to Chicago, and then transferred to the Mississippi River where they were pushed downstream to reach the growing population of the prairie states. By the late nineteenth century, production in the Midwest slowed and lumbermen searched for new forest opportunities. This time, entrepreneurs looked south. It should be noted that although the logging industry migrated, logging never completely stopped in the older areas like the East Coast and the Midwest.

From Virginia to Florida along the Atlantic coast and then west to East Texas, longleaf, slash, shortleaf, and loblolly pine trees dominated the southern region. Despite this, logging in the South was slow to thrive compared to the Midwest for several reasons. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, while the logging

5 Cox, The Lumberman’s Frontier, 138.
industry expanded in the North, settlers in the South valued the forests for agricultural possibilities and wildlife habitats. According to Cox, “...beyond agricultural settlements and pastoralists, forests took on a different value: they provided habitat for deer and fur-bearing animals, trade in the hides and pelts of which was a major undertaking.”6 In the early nineteenth century, loggers in Virginia, North Carolina, and Georgia found markets for Southern lumber in the Northeast but nothing compared to the region’s commercial logging industry in the late 1800s. The South’s slow streams limited the productivity of water-powered mills. Most Southern antebellum structures were either log, which used the complete log as a building material or made of locally sawn timber. In the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries, other areas created timber-framed houses and buildings, and therefore, required more lumber. Although East Texas had a supply of dense forests, the lack of intense settlement and major cities meant there was not a significant demand for lumber. According to the 1860 United States Census, the Southern states operated only 3,630 lumber mills, which is a small number compared to the 14,731 mills operated in the South in 1910.7 Finally, before the Civil War, the South did not have as many established railroads as the

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6 Cox, *The Lumberman’s Frontier*, 216.
North to transport logs to the mill and lumber to market. The majority of the Civil War was fought on Southern land, and it left the infrastructure, railroads, and land damaged. “Faced with a shortage of capital and other problems, Southern mill owners had difficulty rebuilding after the Civil War.” Nevertheless, a new era in the South and in the logging industry was coming.

In the late nineteenth century, railroads brought the logging industry boom to the South. “Southern railroad building surged following the Civil War, encouraged both by state governments that considered railroads vital to the

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8 Cox, *The Lumberman’s Frontier*, 238.
rebuilding process and by Northerners who detected investment opportunities in the
defeated Confederacy.”

In Texas, the Houston East & West Texas Railroad was completed in 1886
and ran from Houston northward through East Texas to Shreveport, Louisiana.10
The commercial bonanza era in Texas was from 1880 to 1930.11 During this period,
hundreds of mills were established with 799 establishments reported in Texas in
1910.12 Some sawmills failed quickly but others spawned huge companies like
Kirby Lumber Company in Beaumont, Texas. The major companies in Angelina
County were the Southern Pine Lumber Company (103 years in operation) and the
Angelina County Lumber Company (97 years in operation). Yet, this example of
longevity was not the standard. Of the 177 mills in Angelina County, most started
and ended between 1880 and 1930, or there was not sufficient evidence to list the
dates.13 Many mills only lasted a couple of years before shutting down.

Workers who cut down the trees were named flatheads. At first, they used
crosscut saws, bow saws, and axes to fell trees but progressed to chainsaws as

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9 Cox, The Lumberman’s Frontier, 238.
10 Robert S. Maxwell and Robert D. Baker, Sawdust Empire: The Texas Lumber Industry
(College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 1983); Thad Sitton, Backwoodsmen: Stockmen and
Hunters along a Big Thicket River Valley (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1995); Thad
Sitton and James Conrad, Nameless Towns: Texas Sawmill Communities 1880-1942 (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1998).
11 Maxwell and Baker, Sawdust Empire, xiii.
12 United States Census, 1910: Manufactures, Reports by States, with Statistics for Principal
https://www.census.gov/prod/www/decennial.html. Establishments are noted as logging
operations, sawmills, shingle mills, planning mills, and wooden packing-box factories.
13 “Sawmill Database,” Texas Forestry Museum, accessed July 4, 2017,
technology developed. Cox wrote, “Unlike in the North, logging camps were not the virtually exclusive domain of bachelors; as a result, they sported family housing – if only converted boxcars – and a modicum of support facilities.”

Camp Nancy was a logging front camp for the Angelina County Lumber Company from 1918-1933. The front camps were portable settlements. Once flatheads cut all the trees down in an area, the camps were moved to the next worksite.

From the scalers who checked the logs first entering the mill to the boys stacking wood in the lumberyard, it took many employees to run a sawmill.

According to Robert Maxwell and Robert Baker, authors of Sawdust Empire, “The standard equipment of the big mills appears to have been the double-band mill.”

The mills also had edgers, trimmers, dry kilns, planers, and yard sheds. In most sawmills, a steam engine powered the mill’s machines. Sitton and Conrad wrote, “From mill pond to boxcar, sawmill work was hard, dangerous, noisy, and dirty, but above all it was unrelenting – forcing each worker to go not at his own best pace but at the hard-driving speed of production.”

Sawmill workers lived in company-owned towns with their families. Some towns like Diboll, Texas started as a small sawmill town and withstood the test of time. Many companies paid their employees in tokens that could only be redeemed within each company’s businesses. It served as a way to keep employees under the

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14 Cox, The Lumberman’s Frontier, 257.
15 Maxwell and Baker, Sawdust Empire, 71.
control of the company and improve overall profitability in the company towns. The W. T. Carter & Bros. Lumber Company in Camden, Texas used metal coins with different sizes for each denomination. Southern Pine Lumber Company in Diboll, Texas used cardboard tokens with different colors and sizes for each denomination. Designing and manufacturing currency was the responsibility of each company. Most company towns had a commissary, doctor, school, church, and post office.

While the logging industry developed in the South, the industry also progressed to the West Coast. Although the western lumber industry, which began with the California Gold Rush in 1949, existed before the Texas bonanza, it did not reach its full potential until the 1910s. California, Washington, and Oregon had access to Pacific markets and shipped lumber by sea. West Coast sawmills also used railroads to transport lumber to eastern markets. Pacific Coast loggers faced different obstacles than in the East or Midwest. The rainy season in the winter made the roads muddy and the mountains were difficult to navigate. High-speed logging is one solution; logs were skidded through the woods by a pulley system. Also, the forest floor was dense with brush so loggers stood on springboards inserted in the tree to stand several feet above the underbrush. The completion of the Panama Canal in 1914 opened up additional markets on the East and Gulf Coast, and encouraged many East Texas and West Louisiana companies to relocate to the much larger forests and markets of the West Coast. When America experienced the

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17 Cox, The Lumberman’s Frontier, 266.
Great Depression in the 1930s, it negatively affected the lumber industry in America but especially in the booming West and South.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, workers in American industries formed unions to fight for improved working conditions. The logging industry had labor disputes too. In 1910, in East Texas and West Louisiana, the Brotherhood of Timber Workers (BTW) formed to ensure a minimum wage, limited workday, payment in U.S. currency, etc. Unions of loggers formed across the country during this period. In 1872, the lumber industry’s Labor Reform Union No. 10 was created in Williamsport, Pennsylvania, and sawmill workers went on strike in the Saginaw Valley in Michigan. Across the country the demands were similar but the East Texas and West Louisiana companies fought back by blacklisting workers and requiring employees to sign an oath not to join the BTW. According to Maxwell and Baker, “Texas lumber workers made wage gains during World War I but not as many as those of West Coast lumber workers...” By the end of 1914, the Brotherhood of Timber Workers was broken.

In Texas, by the mid-twentieth century, most residents and workers had vacated the mill towns and sawmills. There are three reasons for this decline. First, fires destroyed the mills, and it was too expensive to rebuild. According to W. T.

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19 Maxwell and Baker, Sawdust Empire, 133.
Block, author of *East Texas Mill Towns and Ghost Towns*, “In April 1892, the Rice Brothers had to face the total loss of the sawmill facility at Hyatt by fire and the inevitable result that only a fraction loss was covered by fire insurance because sawmill insurance rates were so high.”\(^\text{20}\) If there were not enough trees to justify rebuilding, companies moved the mill or shut down. The second cause of the decline of sawmills in Texas was the Great Depression. With the crash of the stock market in 1929, the American economy entered a depression that lasted a decade. The price of lumber fell below production cost. Thad Sitton and James Conrad, authors of *Nameless Towns*, wrote, “If companies operated from 1931 to 1940, most of them operated at a loss.”\(^\text{21}\) Some companies like the Southern Pine Lumber Company and J.A. Ewing & Company attempted to make it through the hard times by reducing wages, and scheduling each worker at least once a week.\(^\text{22}\) Many mills did not survive the depression. For example, Kirby Lumber Co. closed four mills by the end of 1930. The third cause for sawmill decline in Texas was the cut-and-get-out philosophy. According to Sitton and Conrad, “Buying land made no sense to most companies, since regeneration of pines on cut-over land seemed a dubious possibility, and in any case the next crop of marketable saw timber remained at least


\(^{22}\) Sitton and Conrad, *Nameless Towns*, 201.
a third of a century away.”

T.L.L. Temple, owner of the Southern Pine Lumber Co. in Diboll, was a mill owner whose company had purchased land rather than the usual practice of simply buying timber deeds. Replanting thereby provided a renewable resource for his company. The cut-and-get-out method was used across the United States, and was motivation to continue moving west to uncut forests.

Efforts to remedy the cut-and-get-out methods were already in progress at the national level with Gifford Pinchot and John Muir. In the late nineteenth century, each man represented different sides of the discussion, conservation versus preservation. Pinchot’s conservation means to manage the nation’s natural resources for the commercial market, and Muir’s preservation means to maintain the original integrity of the natural resources.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, while the lumber industry in Texas was at its highest, a conservation movement started in the state. Later named “The Father of Texas Forestry,” W. Goodrich Jones was a businessman with a passion for replanting the cutover Texas lands. In 1900, he wrote, “The butchery of our timber and the shocking waste has sped on from year to year at an ever increasing rate and today we stand no longer as prophets but pointing to the end which comes in

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23 Sitton and Conrad, Nameless Towns, 193.
sight.”

Noticing the town of Temple, Texas had few trees, Jones planted pecan seeds in cans on his hotel windowsill and later planted them in the town. He also assisted in the creation of Texas Arbor Day, the Texas Forestry Association (TFA), and the Texas A&M Forest Service (TFS). Each program promotes tree conservation in Texas. Also, during the Great Depression, President Franklin Roosevelt proposed the New Deal, which created government jobs for people out of work during the economic crisis. The Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) was one of the programs developed. In Texas, the CCC worked on soil conservation, erosion-control, and development of state parks. Through the efforts of Arbor Day activities, TFA, TFS, CCC, and many others, the twentieth century was a time of rebuilding the land that gave the Pineywoods its name. Currently, East Texas has four state forests, eight state parks, and four national forests that were once the cutover remnants of the Texas sawmill era.

There have been many books and articles written about Texas sawmill history. Most of these local histories were written after the 1970s. According to Carol Kammen, author of *On Doing Local History*, “I would date the revival of interest in local history – or perhaps I should say a broadly based concern for it – to the bicentennial of the American Revolution in 1976.”

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26 Carol Kammen, *On Doing Local History*, 2nd ed. (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 2003), 161.
topics: companies, life of workers, and the technology. Histories about the companies present an overview history. Often authors write about the sawmill industry from a business perspective, for example, how many mills existed, how many board feet produced, or the causes for decline. Sawdust Empire by Robert S. Maxwell and Robert D. Baker and Nameless Towns by Thad Sitton and James Conrad are two books that provide an overall industry history but do not present many social perspectives. The drawback of this type of history is that it can become a commemorative history of the company without acknowledging the problems with the industry.

The second type of local sawmill history is the life of the workers. These histories are often specialized and have a narrow topic because they focus closely on the human experience. For example, Rub Onions and Skunk Oil by Bob Bowman is a collection of home remedies and folk medicines. Also, with the availability of recording devices, came oral histories, which aimed to capture the memories and experiences of local residents. Call Home is a transcription of John Cleaveland Gee Jr.’s experiences living in the sawmill town of Call, Texas. The East Texas Research Center at Stephen F. Austin State University has dozens of audio interviews of East Texas residents on topics like loggers, lumber camps, medical personnel, and forests. The unfavorable aspect of this type of history is nostalgia. Over time, memories get hazy and are not always the facts of what happened. In addition, it is
much easier for opinions to have a voice in personal histories but be presented as facts. The histories of the life of workers offer a different perspective than of the sawmill industry or the history of technology because it provides a social history that the others lack.

The third type of local sawmill history is about technology. These histories focus on the types of tools used, the productivity of the process, and changes in the industry. W. T. Block’s three volumes of *East Texas Mill Towns and Ghost Towns* have very little narrative but mostly offer facts about tools and productivity of the process within each mill. Also, Joseph W. Lewis’s *Date Nails* is a pictorial reference book about the nails used to date the East Texas logging railroad ties. The unfavorable aspect of these histories is that they present a narrow topic of history and do not offer broad connections to other aspects of the industry or personal experiences of the workers who used the technology. Local histories do not only fit in one category. There are personal experiences in *Nameless Towns* and *East Texas Mill Towns and Ghost Towns*. There are technology histories in *Sawdust Empire*. The topics do overlap but it is difficult to find a source with all three topics presented equally. The new Sawmill Town History Wing at the Texas Forestry Museum presents a more comprehensive history of the sawmill industry in Texas by including company, personal, and technology histories.
MAKING DECISIONS

Many choices go into creating a good exhibit. Most decisions are established best practices, which experts in the field consider the best way to communicate the exhibit message to the visitor. A few of these subjects include font style, font size, panel placement, interactive elements, exhibit flow, and interpretive writing. The original Sawmill Town History Wing was outdated and needed fresh ideas and designs according to current best practices. This chapter will present proposed changes in flow, panel aesthetics, content, and interactive elements to create a more effective experience for the visitors.

Changes in Flow

The first proposed change is the flow or movement of visitors through the Sawmill Town History Wing. Upon entering the room, if a visitor knew which way to turn first, the original exhibit had a workable flow. There was an order to the information, which circled the room from left to right but visitors had no way of knowing that. Visitors explored the exhibits in a counter clockwise direction, clockwise direction, or wandered with no directional flow. Also, there was no introductory panel to orient visitors to what they were about to experience. Entering straight from the Money Trees exhibit, visitors walked into the 3,000 square foot open-concept room with no instruction on where to begin. Each sub-
exhibit was complete individually but the whole story made more sense when explored the direction the museum intended. According to Beverly Serrell, author of *Exhibit Labels*, "Visitor research studies have shown that visitors who understand the organization of the exhibition and use it in the intended sequence (if there is one) spend more time and get more out of it."

Creating a new introductory exhibit was the first step toward a better flow for the Sawmill Town History Wing. This required reconfiguring the room’s entrance and exit access from other museum exhibit areas. Erin McClelland, who conducted an audit of the museum in 2013, found that entrances to both the Sawmill Town History Wing and the Paper Mill Room, at the end of the Money Trees exhibit hallway, confused visitors about which direction to turn next. McClelland advised closing off the entry to the Paper Mill Room from the Money Trees exhibit and creating a new entry to the Paper Mill Room directly from the Sawmill Town History Wing. This would provide visitors with a clear sense of direction by creating only one entrance/exit option from one exhibit space to another. There are two emergency exits in the Sawmill Town History Wing and one in the Paper Mill Room

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that open directly to outside. Although the new floor plan is not as open as before, this will not affect the museum visitor’s safety.\footnote{See Floor Plan 3. Sawmill Town Wing: After Layout, 5.}

Once inside the Sawmill Town History Wing, an introductory sub-exhibit will be created in order to familiarize visitors with the full exhibit’s content. Two walls will be added to form a small lobby area for the exhibit and therefore leave only one direction for visitors to proceed. The new walls will solve the previous flow problem. Now, there is a definitive path to follow because once visitors enter the new Sawmill Town History Wing, they will move in a clockwise motion until they exit to the Paper Mill Room.

Although visitors may browse the Sawmill Town History Wing in any order they wish, there is an intended path that will provide the visitor with the most effective understanding of the message because the history is presented in themes. By starting with cutting down the trees, visitors can follow the whole process of making logs into lumber and will end with an exhibit about how the workers lived with their families. According to Barry Lord and Gail Dexter Lord, authors and editors of The Manual of Museum Exhibitions, “Large interconnected galleries may allow the visitors to move about as freely as they wish. However, this type of experience can be disorienting or frustrating for a visitor looking for an orderly and
organized visit.”⁴ To assist the more structured visitors, there are three elements that will help guests move through the Sawmill Town History Wing in a clockwise direction: sub-exhibit titles, thematic illustrations, and floor arrows. Not only will each sub-exhibit have large titles, there will be a list of the titles in the designated viewing order in the introduction area. This will provide visitors with a clear outline of the room from the beginning. Also, small thematic illustrations will be assigned to each sub-exhibit and will be placed next to its titles, text panels, and caption panels. For example, the transportation sub-exhibit will be represented by a wagon loaded with logs pulled by mules. This pictograph will be next to the title list in the introductory exhibit, and on every panel within the sub-exhibit to give the visitors a visual tether to the room’s organization. Finally, arrows placed on the floor will direct visitors from one sub-exhibit to the next. They will be approximately one square foot and have the next exhibit’s title and pictograph. In addition to restructuring the Sawmill Town History Wing’s entrance, these three elements will provide a better flow to the room.

**Changes in Panel Aesthetics**

The second change involves the panel aesthetics, which include panel placement, text size, specialized features, and word count. The panel placement in the original Sawmill Town History Wing was not far off from best practices, and it

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was consistent so visitors were accustomed to looking for the text at similar heights throughout the exhibit. Nevertheless, it is important that the museum better accommodate all visitors by placing text in an appropriate height range. When deciding where to place panels on the wall, it is difficult to modify the height for every circumstance. From an adult who is 6’5” to a child who is 3’5”, there is a limited range where everyone can see the text easily. According to the Smithsonian Guidelines for Accessible Exhibition Design, an adult man in a wheelchair has an average eye level of between forty-three inches and fifty-one inches.\(^5\) In order to accommodate all types of visitors, the National Park Service recommends placing the smallest text within the eye level range of a person in a wheelchair to a standing adult, which is forty inches to sixty inches from the floor.\(^6\) If placed outside this range, the text should increase in size as the distance away from the panel increases. Most panels from the original Sawmill Town History Wing were displayed between thirty inches to seventy-four inches from the floor. The highest title was viewed at eighty-eight inches from the floor. The future Sawmill Town History Wing will narrow the panel placement to be within the recommended ranges by the Smithsonian Institution and the National Park Service: forty to sixty inches.


The text size is just as important an element as placement. It does not matter if the panels are within the recommended eye level range if they are too small or large to read easily. The new Sawmill Town History Wing text will follow guidelines set by Beverly Serrell in *Exhibit Labels* and by Barry Lord and Gail Dexter Lord in *The Manual of Museum Exhibitions*. There will be four levels of text: titles, main text, captions, and special. Every level will follow the same design guidelines throughout the room in order to provide continuity throughout the exhibit. Because the Sawmill Town History Wing is a large open space, each sub-exhibit title should be seen at ease from any point in the room to give the visitor a clear sense of the floor plan. The titles in the original Sawmill Town History Exhibit were more than four inches tall. Their large size was abrasive and jarring compared to the rest of the exhibit’s text sizes. The new sub-exhibit titles will be three inches tall to allow for easy viewing and better cohesiveness with the rest of the exhibit text.

The main text of the original Sawmill Town History Wing varied in font size. Within each sub-exhibit the first panel was seventy-two point font and the following panels were twenty-eight font. The first text was too big and intimidating because the paragraph covers such a large surface area. The second text was too small to read text easily. In the new Sawmill Town History Wing, all of the main text will be

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thirty-six point font, which falls within the thirty to forty point font guidelines set by Lord and Lord.⁹

The original Sawmill Town History Wing had few artifact and image captions but those that were there varied in size like the main text. They ranged from eighteen to twenty point font, which is similar to the best practice standards. All new captions will be twenty point font, which is calibrated for visitors standing two feet away.

Titles for both main text and captions will not increase in font size but will be bolded in the same size as the corresponding text. According to Serrell, “Bold is often used for titles and display type, but it is not often recommended for body copy.”¹⁰ By bolding the title and not the text, the titles will draw the visitor’s eyes first and provide a brief description of the text. Donor information included in the captions will be the same size as the caption text but italicized to designate a difference between object and donor information. It is important to visually separate the history text from the donor text so the visitor knows exactly what to expect before they read. Special text panels include Insider’s Notes, which act as an aside to the exhibit information. Because they are different than the overall message, they should look different as well. Serrell writes, “Size, typeface, color, graphic design, length, placement, and content will all be cues for what the label’s

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¹⁰ Serrell, Exhibit Labels: An Interpretive Approach, 195.
purpose is. Multiple cues should be employed to ensure that visitors will easily follow the logic of the exhibition designers’ intent and messages.”

11 The title and text will be thirty-point with the title bolded. There will be a circle icon that says, “Insider’s Note” in thirty-six point font so visitors know immediately they are reading information different from the exhibit message.

The Insider’s Note icons will include information about the background of artifacts, museum care, or exhibit installation. There was no element like this in the original Sawmill Town History Wing but this will be a fun addition to the exhibit, and give guests a peek into artifact curation and exhibit creation. There will be a limit of only one or two Insider’s Notes per sub-exhibit. Because these are additional insights separate from the main message of the new Sawmill Town History Wing, too many would visually crowd the visitors and distract from the main message.

Limitation of text length is important. There are guidelines for the amount of words in each panel as well as for an entire exhibit. Too many words can be intimidating to visitors, especially if the panels can be seen at one glance from the room’s entry. There are 3,940 words in the original Sawmill Town History Wing, which includes titles, main text, and artifact captions. According to Serrell, the average time a visitor will spend in an exhibit of our size (3,000 square foot) is ten

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11 Serrell, Exhibit Labels: An Interpretive Approach, 35.
minutes, and five words per second is the average reading speed.\textsuperscript{12,13} Based on this information, the new Sawmill Town History Wing should have no more than 3,000 words. A goal of this project is to lower the word count to only the most important points in order to communicate the main exhibit message. There is a word count listed in the attached exhibit text for each title, main text, and caption panel. This will ensure that the panels stay within the exhibition text standards recommended by Lord and Lord in \textit{The Manual of Museum Exhibitions}, which presents the recommended amount of words for each category: titles, main text, captions, etc.\textsuperscript{14} The word count will not be included in the exhibit panels on display because this information is not part of the message of the exhibit.

However, the least amount of words as possible should not be the primary goal for the exhibit. According to Carol Kammen, author of \textit{On Doing Local History}, condensing a project too much can warp the message. “Compression had created partial truths by imparting a fragment of the story while skirting the real significance of the place being marked...Statements were not exactly wrong, but they certainly were not right either.”\textsuperscript{15} Misleading the visitors, intentional or not, is worse than a lengthy panel. Attention to historical accuracy of the exhibit message should always be the main focus.

\textsuperscript{12} Serrell, \textit{Exhibit Labels: An Interpretive Approach}, 71.
\textsuperscript{13} Serrell, \textit{Exhibit Labels: An Interpretive Approach}, 27.
\textsuperscript{15} Carol Kammen, \textit{On Doing Local History}, 3\textsuperscript{rd} ed. (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 2003), 117.
In addition to word count, ease of reading or reading level is monitored with each panel text. Alan Leftridge, author of *Interpretive Writing*, writes it is a misconception that all text be at an eighth grade reading level. Instead, the message should depend on the target audience.\(^\text{16}\) The original Sawmill Town History Wing measures at a 9.2 reading level on the Flesch-Kincaid Scale, which is close to the goal for the new exhibit text. The museum’s visitors are mainly families with children or retired adults. With this broad range, the exhibit’s goal is to maintain a middle school (sixth to eighth grade) reading level. This will provide ease for younger readers but not so simple that it bores our more experienced readers.

Choosing a font style is an important decision because it will be used to display 3,500 words in the Sawmill Town History Wing. According to Serrell, “Typography affects both the mood and the message,” so font style should work with the other exhibit elements to provide the main message.\(^\text{17}\) In order to fully understand how a font style would look, sample text was printed in many different font styles and in the font size of the main text and captions to weed out small differences that do not create the best exhibit. These examples were hung on the wall at the height of the future panels with the font name on the back in order to conduct a blind test.

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\(^{16}\) Alan Leftridge, *Interpretive Writing* (Fort Collins, CO: The National Association for Interpretation, 2006), 91.

\(^{17}\) Serrell, *Exhibit Labels: An Interpretive Approach*, 189.
Samples of these different fonts are presented below with comments. Only one segment of the test text is provided to give the reader an idea of what made the font stand out without taking up too much space in the chapter. The first decision was to determine the use of serif or sans-serif. Serif fonts have extending features at the end of each letter’s line, and sans-serif fonts do not. According to Serrell, “Some serif faces are associated with more classical, sophisticated or traditional looks. Sans serif faces are sometimes called ‘clean’ or ‘modern.’”¹⁸ The traditional image is exactly what eliminated Cambria.¹⁹

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cambria</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In the late 19ᵗʰ century, towns like Lufkin were just starting.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Cambria projected a too formal image. The new Sawmill Town History Wing needs to be seen as approachable and unintimidating to our casual, non-historian visitor.

There were also inconsistencies that eliminated some font styles. For instance, Georgia had uneven numbers. The “9” falls below the base line.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Georgia</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In the late 19ᵗʰ century, towns like Lufkin were just starting.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


¹⁹ Microsoft Word 2011 was used to write this thesis. Certain font characteristics may change when transferred to different software versions.
Sans-serif fonts were more desirable than serif fonts but some sans-serif fonts had elements that caused elimination. With Calibri, the superscript was too high above the rest of the text.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Calibri</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In the late 19th century, towns like Lufkin were just starting.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When Avenir Roman was bolded, for a caption title, the letters were too far apart.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Avenir Roman</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Memory Map -&gt; Memory Map</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It came down to the last three Franklin Gothic Book, Gill Sans, and PT Sans. When compared with each other in the form of a paragraph of exhibit text, small differences stood out. Franklin Gothic Book’s letters were too big and close together, and Gill Sans was too bold.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Franklin Gothic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In the late 19th century, towns like Lufkin were just starting.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gill Sans</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In the late 19th century, towns like Lufkin were just starting.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
PT Sans provided the best clean and modern look without special characteristics some font styles have.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PT Sans</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In the late 19th century, towns like Lufkin were just starting.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When the font size increases from this chapter’s twelve point font to the twenty point for captions and thirty-six point for main text, each font style’s characteristics are emphasized. The font style, panel placement, font size, word count, and reading level are elements that when combined, create the complete image and message of the Sawmill Town History Wing.

**Changes in Content**

The content of the new Sawmill Town History Wing is, perhaps, the most important element of the project. All the other changes help present the message to the visitors but the content is the message. The new Sawmill Town History Wing will change how the history is presented and how the content is organized to provide a better experience for museum visitors.

The content for the new Sawmill Town History Wing will change how the history is presented by incorporating a personal element and addressing the difficult history of segregation. The text in the old Sawmill Town History Wing was not bad or wrong but it focused too much on the technical process of transforming

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logs to lumber. In reference to the old Sawmill Town History Wing, McClelland wrote, "By failing to make regular, explicit connections to everyday people’s lives (both past and present), the museum loses the opportunity to make its collections and exhibit content meaningful to visitors."20 The original exhibit content was too focused on the process instead of the people. In Freeman Tilden’s *Interpreting Our Heritage*, he writes, “The visitor’s chief interest is in whatever touches his personality, his experience and his ideals."21 The new text brings a more human element into the story with personal accounts and a point of view shift. People are quoted several times in the new Sawmill Town History Wing. For example, in the Life in a Sawmill Town sub-exhibit, Icie Waltman is quoted in the “Hats on Sunday” panel. She said, “Back then, you just didn’t go into church without a hat on your head.”22 Having a first-person testimony gives more validity to the information because it is a primary source for the topic. Another way the new Sawmill Town History Wing brings a more human element is with a point of view shift. For instance, in the old content, the process of turning logs into lumber in the sawmill focused on the experience of the log or the work of the machines. The new content presents that same information but the journey follows the workers not just the work. The sawmill steps are now headed by job title Scaler, Block Setter, Sawyer,

Edger Man, etc. By taking the visitors through the sawmill process with the employees, it brings the human element back to the work and reminds the visitor that these were the jobs of real people. Personal accounts and a point of view shift, bring a personal side to the new content in the Sawmill Town History Wing.

The Sawmill Town History Wing covers the time period of 1880 to 1930. During this time, segregation was a part of sawmill history. The old Sawmill Town History Wing included photographs showing races other than white but due to the poor quality of the black and white photographs, it is difficult to see the different races. It was evident that except for the working in the woods section, there are very few photographs showing nonwhites. In the text, there is only one reference to segregation but it was not addressed directly. According to the essay, “Developing a Comprehensive and Conscientious Interpretation of Slavery at Historic Sites and Museums” by Kristin L. Gallas and James DeWolf Perry, “A 2008 study found that a majority of respondents felt that museums do have a role in presenting controversial topics.”23 The new Sawmill Town History Wing will present the segregation of sawmill towns through photographs and text. There are panels about segregation in the mill, in the school system, and in the housing arrangements. The text directly speaks about segregation, the steps taken to keep the races apart, and

the disparities between whites and nonwhites. Also, it is important to show nonwhites outside of talking about segregation. In his essay, “Asking Big Questions of a Small Place” George McDaniel writes, African American history’s, “interpretation therefore should not be limited to a special facility or program, but instead, be interwoven into the entire fabric of the site.” Nonwhites worked and lived in the sawmill towns, and every sub-exhibit will reflect that by including photographs of different races. The new Sawmill Town History Wing addresses the difficult history of segregation in sawmill towns through text and photographs. Currently, there are not sufficient or readily available primary or secondary sources about this topic to easily go any deeper into the subject of segregation in sawmill towns.

The new Sawmill Town History Wing will change how the content is organized by creating exhibit themes, choosing new photographs and artifacts to display, and presenting the information in small segments. In writing the text for the history of the sawmill town, it was easy to stray from message. As Kammen wrote, “Local history is, despite its limited geographical focus, a broad field of inquiry: it is the political, social, and economic history of a community and its religious and intellectual history.” There was so much to include. To keep on

25 Kammen, On Doing Local History, 4.
topic, I created theme sentences for the whole exhibit and each sub-exhibit. Alan Leftridge, author of *Interpretive Writing*, said, "Theme development is fundamental to all writing styles. Themes make writing clear."\(^{26}\) Although sawmills existed in Texas before 1880, the new Sawmill Town History Wing presents the history of sawmills from 1880 to 1930 because McClelland recommended in her audit that the museum limit the exhibit’s interpretive time frame. In *Sawdust Empire*, Robert S. Maxwell and Robert D. Baker wrote, “The commercial industry began about 1880, and the following half-century was truly a bonanza era, marked by the rise, peak, and decline of Texas lumbering based on the exploitation of the virgin pine forests west of the Sabine.”\(^{27}\) Hundreds of companies started sawmills during this time to capitalize on the industry’s momentum. Maxwell and Baker wrote, “One characteristic feature of the Texas lumber industry in the bonanza era was the company town, which was completely dependent on the sawmill and its owners for survival.”\(^{28}\) Sawmill employees and their families worked and lived in the company town, and museum visitors will get an education about sawmill town life in the new exhibit. The main theme for the whole exhibit is, “1880-1930 was the height of the sawmill town in East Texas where workers turned trees into wood products, and lived with their families in company-owned towns.” It is a broad but clear message,

\(^{26}\) Leftridge, *Interpretive Writing*, 9.
and only panels that support this main idea were created. Although there are many interesting facts about sawmill towns, I whittled down the facts to only the information that supported the panel themes. Visitors will leave with a clear understanding of sawmill history because each sub-exhibit supports a central theme.

Choosing the photographs for the new Sawmill Town History Wing was purposeful. In the old Sawmill Town History Wing, there were 154 photographs with only about a dozen captioned. This presents a confusing experience for the visitor because there is no explanation to the who, what, when, where of the photographs. In the museum audit, McClelland recommended, “Selecting fewer, higher-quality images and laying them out in a way that is most impactful and best supports the exhibit’s narrative would be much more effective.”29 In response, the new Sawmill Town History Wing has only thirty-eight photographs but each was chosen to serve a purpose, and every photograph has a caption. The goal was to have the pictures support the message. For instance, in the Life in a Sawmill Town sub-exhibit, there is a panel about segregated housing accompanied by a picture of a black family outside their home. Also, in the Working in a Sawmill sub-exhibit, a panel explains what an edger man does, and next to it is a picture of Bill Griffin, an edger man for the Angelina County Lumber Company in Keltys.

Figure 1

1986.005.3231, Texas Forestry Museum Archives

Figure 2

1988.034.0019, Texas Forestry Museum Archives
Although there are far fewer photographs in the new Sawmill Town History Wing, they are captioned and support the main message. This allows the images to speak louder than when there were too many photographs for the visitors to clearly focus on and contemplate. High-quality copies of the photographs will be used in the new Sawmill Town History Wing in order to keep the originals preserved in the archives.

Similar to the photographs, the artifacts were also purposefully chosen in order to present sawmill history but also maximize floor space. McClelland noted in her museum audit that “numerous large objects in the galleries has cluttered the museum over the years.”

In the Sawmill Town History Wing, many big artifacts cannot be moved or put into storage because they are too large. The planer, steam engine, and Martin Wagon are in the same position for the old and new Sawmill Town History Wing floor plans. Lord and Lord wrote, “It is very often the case that the museum can tell its story better with fewer artefacts displayed in more space, so that sufficient attention may be paid to interpretation.”

Artifacts like the lumber dolly and the blacksmith forge moved to storage in the new Sawmill Town History floor plan. In Stephen Beckow’s essay, “Culture, History, and Artifact," he writes, “Each [artifact] gives evidence of the human presence; each testifies to the existence of certain human skills and intentions.”

All of the artifacts in the old Sawmill Town

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History Wing provided a historical perspective but sometimes space is needed more. For instance, the lumber dolly and blacksmith forge created a cramped area around the planer. Also, visitors had to look across the artifacts to read the text on the wall behind the artifacts. It was not a workable space. The planer is too big to move so the dolly and forge were put in museum storage. Some smaller blacksmith tools were included in new exhibit but they do not take up a large amount of floor space. Another way to maximize floor space is by creating wall displays with smaller items. The blacksmith tools, saws, tokens, etc. will be displayed behind Plexiglas covers on the wall. This will create a visually appealing exhibit without taking up any additional floor space. The last way to maximize space in the new Sawmill Town History Wing is to restructure the post office boxes. The boxes were framed and displayed with a large hexagonal base with no historical context. This takes up a large amount of room that is needed for the new entrance/exit. Therefore, the framed post office boxes will be taken off the base and displayed against the wall. Moving artifacts to storage, creating wall displays, and restructuring the post office boxes will create a floor plan with more space for visitors to walk around in the new Sawmill Town History Wing.

The old Sawmill Town History Wing had 3,900 words, which only included titles, main text, and artifact captions. One of the goals of this project was to reduce the total word count and only include necessary text for the visitor to understand
the message. Although previously stated that the new Sawmill Town History Wing should have no more than 3,000 words, it has closer to 4,000 words. However, there are three reasons why this is not a problem: photograph captions, titles, and text chunks. Few of the previous 154 photographs in the old Sawmill Town History Wing had captions and, McClelland noted the photographs are, “laid out in such a dense manner that no image can have a significant impact on the viewer.” Adding photograph captions to the new Sawmill Town History Wing is a necessity, and making specific choices for meaningful photographs limits photograph and caption overload. Also, not only do the captions have titles but every panel has a title. The old Sawmill Town History Wing had no text titles and it was daunting to start reading a large paragraph not knowing its subject. This allows visitors to decide whether the panel is of interest to them before they start. Finally, keeping the text short makes reading the information more attractive to visitors who do not want to read everything. Serrell writes, “Writing and designing exhibit text in ‘chunks’ of information can lead to exhibitions that are more accessible in a non-linear, time-limited way.” Out of 122 panels, only fourteen have more than fifty words, and the largest panel is seventy-eight words. There are no essays to be posted on the wall. The content was written with reading speed in mind by captioning all photographs and artifacts individually, titling every panel, and keeping the text in chunks.

34 Serrell, Exhibit Labels: An Interpretive Approach, 72.
Changes in Interactive Elements

Interactive elements make a visit to the museum an experience and not just an education. Barry Lord wrote, “With the exception of school groups, visitors have chosen to come to the museum as a place of informal learning; they have not chosen to enter a formal educational setting, so the curator must not attempt to transform the gallery into a classroom.” 35 By including participatory activities, visitors will be more engaged in the learning. The old Sawmill Town History Wing had several existing interactive elements that stayed in the new design. Kids played dress up in the doctor area and looked at x-rays on a light table. The museum also offered a scavenger hunt for kids with answers found in the exhibits throughout the building. When the visitors finish, they returned to the front desk for a prize. These activities kept children engaged in learning outside of the designated play area. A documentary about Camden, Texas played to the open room. This film will be shown in the new Sawmill Town History Wing but visitors will use headphones so the film sounds do not conflict with the period music played over speakers in the room. Although not every visitor got to see it, the steam engine is electrified and can be turned on. For safety purposes, only the staff has access to turn on the machine but all tours get to see it. These elements made the old Sawmill Town History Wing interactive for visitors but there are more opportunities in the new design.

There are several additions to the new Sawmill Town History Wing that will make the experience better for the visitors. An oral history audio tour will be available to visitors to purchase. Barry Lord wrote, “Audio tours may also help some visitors to contemplate aspects of the works on display that they might otherwise have missed.”\(^{36}\) The audio tour will be supplementary to the exhibit panels and use clips of oral history interviews with people who lived in East Texas front camps or sawmill towns. A symbol on exhibit panels will signal visitors that a clip is available to listen to about the panel topic. One important set of interviews the United States Forest Service in the 1990s. Visitors will also be able to participate in activities like creating their own log brand using colorful scratch pads or voting for which sawmill job they would want to do with tokens and jars. Nina Simon, author of *The Participatory Museum*, wrote, “Personalized experiences often promote more emotional connections than traditional content experiences, which also means people are more likely to remember and be interested in re-engaging with their creations.”\(^{37}\) By creating a log brand or asking themselves what they would do, these activities personally connect the history to the visitor. The last element added to the new Sawmill Town History Wing is visitors will file letters in the post office boxes. The museum’s post office boxes are from Manning, Texas. Non-historical envelopes with names of real Manning residents give children a


\(^{37}\) Nina Simon, *The Participatory Museum* (Santa Cruz, CA: Museum 2.0, 2010), 68.
chance to practice alphabetizing while sorting the letters to their proper box. Interactive elements make the sawmill history presented on the exhibit panels become an experience for the visitor.

**Conclusion**

The old Sawmill Town History Wing exhibits were mostly created in the mid-1990s. The room needed fresh ideas and designs based on current best practices. Lord and Lord’s *The Manual of Museum Exhibitions* (2014) and Serrell’s *Exhibit Labels* (2015) are just two of the books that establish the standards in exhibit design. Based on their writings, the new Sawmill Town History Wing will have a workable flow, readable panels, and organized content. Using McClelland’s museum audit as a guideline, the new Sawmill Town History Wing will have refreshed exhibits based on current best practices. This will create a more effective educational experience for the visitors. The following section is a complete plan of each panel in the proposed exhibit including but not limited to, panel number, text, associated artifacts and photographs, word count, and reading level.
**EXHIBIT TEXT**

Sawmill Town History Wing

**Section 1**

**Introduction**

Panel 1-1

**Title**

Sawmill Town History

**Subtitle**

1880-1930

[5 words]

Panel 1-2

**Main Text**

In the late 19th century, towns like Lufkin were just starting and the area was densely covered with trees. A sawmill town is where employees lived with their families while working to turn trees into lumber.

Lumber company jobs included logging, transporting the logs, and working in the mill to produce lumber or pulp. There was so much more to the towns than just the mill. Most towns boasted schools, commissaries, post offices, and a doctor.

[78 words; 7.2 grade level]

Panel 1-3

**Text**

Sawmill town life does not exist like it did 100 years ago. Step into this room to take a journey through history.

1) Front Camps
2) Transportation

50
3) Working in a Sawmill
4) Life in a Sawmill Town
[35 words; 5.3 grade level]

Panel 1-4
Document 1-1 Map – Forest, Texas
Caption Title Memory Map
Caption Text This unique map of Forest, Texas illustrates the town and sawmill from the residents’ perspective.
Can you find the post office?
Reproduced with permission from Steve Chandler
[23 words; 6.8 grade level]

Panel 1-5
Object 1-1 Manning, Texas Model
1991.001.0001
Caption Title Manning, Texas Model
Caption Text The model represents the sawmill town of Manning, Texas in 1926.
Created and donated by Robert Flournoy.
[13 words; 10.3 grade level]

Panel 1-6
Title Insider’s Note
Manning Model
Mr. Flournoy borrows the model every year for the reunion at Manning, Texas. One year, a man told Mr. Flournoy that the model looked great – just as he remembered – except his house was not on it. He lived in a boxcar at the end of Dirty Street.

Can you find the 3 new boxcar homes Mr. Flournoy added to the model?  
[62 words; 6.0 grade level]

Panel 1-7

Document 1-2 Photograph 
LOT 7414-F, no. N33 
Library of Congress

Caption Title Angelina Four

Caption Text The music in the Sawmill Town History Wing is from the Angelina Four. They worked for the Angelina County Lumber Company at Keltys.

The songs are titled “Traveling Man” and “Boll Weevil.”

Photograph and audio reproduced with permission from the Library of Congress.  
[34 words; 7.5 grade level]

Introduction Sub-Exhibit Total Word Count: 250 words

Section 2 Front Camps

Panel 2-1

Title Front Camps  
[2 words]
### Panel 2-2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>What are Front Camps?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Text</td>
<td>Loggers cut down trees in the woods far from the sawmills. In the late 1800s, transportation in and out of the woods was neither quick nor easy so getting back to the sawmill each night was tough. Workers and their families lived in portable towns called front camps near the worksites.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[52 words; 7.0 grade level]

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### Panel 2-3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Document 2-1</th>
<th>Photograph 1986.005.2086</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Caption Title</td>
<td>Virgin Timber</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caption Text</td>
<td>In 1890, many of the trees in East Texas had grown for decades. J.W. Getsinger (left) and J.T. Gillespie (right) worked for Thompson Brothers in Doucette, Texas in 1908. Can you imagine cutting down these giant trees with only a crosscut saw and an ax? Donated by John Thompson.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[45 words; 8.0 grade level]

---

### Panel 2-4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>The Work: Flatheads</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Text</td>
<td>Loggers were also called flatheads, and it was their job to cut down the trees. Flatheads set the speed of production for the sawmill. If the supply of logs ran out, the mill shut down.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

53
In the beginning, flatheads used crosscut saws and bow saws to fell the huge trees. Later, chainsaws increased the rate of production.

[58 words; 4.1 grade level]
1987.004.0004

Caption Title  Two Man Chainsaw at Work
Caption Text  Two men use a chainsaw to chop a fallen tree into smaller, easier to manage pieces.

Donated by Shirley Daniel.
[18 words; 7.8 grade level]

Panel 2-8

Document 2-5  Photograph  1986.005.4492
Caption Title  Loggers
Caption Text  A group of flatheads and skidder crews who worked for Thompson & Ford Lumber Company in Sour Lake, Texas. Circa 1908.

Donated by John Thompson.
[20 words; 8.7 grade level]

Panel 2-9

Object 2-1  Crosscut Saw  1901.602.0440
Caption Title  Crosscut Saw
Caption Text  Two men pull the saw back and forth to cut down trees.
[14 words; 2.5 grade level]
Once the tree was safely on the ground, loggers used bow saws to cut off limbs turning it into a log.

Donated by Shirley Daniel.

[20 words; 6.3 grade level]

Lufkin Industries, Inc. first manufactured the Lufkin 46-A Chain Saw in the fall of 1953. Over 3,000 chain saws were sold in Louisiana, Oklahoma, Arkansas, and Texas before the product was discontinued in 1954.

R.R. “Buddy” Boynton, the Lufkin employee who designed the saw, delivered the first purchased chain saw on May 28, 1953.

[57 words; 12.0 grade level]

Two-Man Chain Saw

[56 words; 6.3 grade level]
This two-man chain saw is gasoline-powered and made work much faster than using a manual saw.

Donated by Shirley Daniel.
[18 words; 9.7 grade level]

Panel 2-13

Title
The Work: Skidders

Text
The skidder crew dragged the fallen trees from the work site to a river, a train, or a wagon. Once loaded, the logs went to the sawmill.

In the beginning, the oxen or mules took one log at a time out of the woods using the high wheel cart. Steam skidders were much faster but also more dangerous.
[59 words; 4.9 grade level]

Panel 2-14

Document 2-6
Photograph
1986.005.1009

Caption Title
High Wheel Cart

Caption Text
In this 1908 photograph, workers attached the large log to the cart with chains. When the animals pulled the cart, one end of the log lifted up and made it easier to drag out of the woods.

Donated by John Thompson.
[39 words; 5.3 grade level]
Caption Title
Steam Skidder

Caption Text
The machine moved along the railroad tracks. Workers attached long wires from the skidder to the logs in the woods. Then, with dangerous force, the skidder pulled in the log from the woods. Circa 1908.

Donated by John Thompson.
[35 words; 4.1 grade level]

Panel 2-16
Title
Living in a Front Camp

Text
Workers and families lived in portable houses that could be easily moved from one site to the next. Boxcars and tents were common. Camp Nancy (Angelina County) included a school and church for the residents.
[36 words; 7.1 grade level]

Panel 2-17
Document 2-8
Photograph
1997.032.0002

Caption Title
Camp Tents

Caption Text
Front camp workers and families lived in temporary housing. In this 1930 photo, logging families stand in front of their tents with mule teams.

Donated by Alton Morris.
[25 words; 6.2 grade level]
Panel 2-18

Document 2-9 Photograph
2001.032.0001

Caption Title Water Boy

Caption Text In 1929, Elwin Tatum was a water boy for Carter-Kelly Co. in Manning, Texas. He delivered water to the crews in the woods with his mule.

[26 words; 6.7 grade level]

Panel 2-19

Title Moving On

Text Once all the trees were cut, the crew moved to a different site. The front camp town moved with them.

It was common practice to cut-out-and-get-out, never investing any more effort into that particular site. T.L.L. Temple with Southern Pine Lumber Co. in Diboll replanted the areas. In the future, the company returned to the site and cut again.

[59 words; 7.4 grade level]

Front Camp Sub-Exhibit Total Word Count: 630 words

Section 3 Transportation

Panel 3-1

Title Transportation to the Mill

[4 words]
Panel 3-2
Title  How Do Logs Get to the Mill?
Text  There are three ways to transport logs to the mill: Rails, Water, & Roads.
[14 words; 3.3 grade level]

Panel 3-3
Title  Railroads Changed Everything
Text  In the late 1800s, railroads created more convenient transportation to get wood in and out of the mill. Naturally expanding railroads created a continued lumber demand for cross ties, bridge timbers, and depots.
[34 words; 9.7 grade level]

Panel 3-4
Document 3-1 Photograph  1978.321.0002
Caption Title  Traveling Down the Rails
Caption Text  The Angelina Lumber Company’s #110 train pulled cars full of logs.
Donated by June Terry.
[13 words; 9.4 grade level]

Panel 3-5
Title  Spur Lines
Spur lines are short railroad tracks that branch off from the main line. Workers laid the spur tracks to get the trains in and out of the front camps. Once the job was finished, the temporary lines were picked up and moved to the next worksite.

[47 words; 4.0 grade level]

Once the skidder crew loaded the logs, the train transported the logs to the sawmill. Mill workers unloaded the logs down a ramp and into the log pond.

[29 words; 5.5 grade level]

Sawmill children often played on the train tracks. Many kids put pennies on the tracks to be smashed flat by passing trains.

This is considered a dangerous activity today.

[30 words; 3.7 grade level]

If the worksite and sawmill were located near a lake or river, transporting the logs by water was an option.
However, heavy free-floating logs could be dangerous because of their uncertain movements.
[33 words; 10.1 grade level]

Panel 3-9

Document 3-2  Photograph  1995.092.0002

Caption Title  Traveling Down the River

Caption Text  Workers created rafts for work on the water in the Pine Cypress Bayou. In 1910, these two men pushed the logs to the Miller Vidor Lumber Company in Orange, Texas.

Published in American Lumberman.
[29 words; 7.1 grade level]

Panel 3-10

Document 3-3  Photograph  1989.018.0333

Caption Title  Pond Monkeys

Caption Text  The Kirby Lumber Company’s Bessmay Mill Yard Crew pose with their pike poles. Men who worked in the millpond pushing the logs to the mill were called pond monkeys.

Donated by Doug Dvorman.
[31 words; 5.6 grade level]

Panel 3-11

Object 3-1  Pike Pole
1998.019.0001

Caption Title  Pike Pole
Caption Text  While in the river, men balanced on logs or rafts while pushing logs toward the mill with the pike pole.

Donated by Bob Little.
[22 words; 7.4 grade level]

Panel 3-12

Object 3-2  Log Brand
2014.005.0004

Caption Title  Log Brand
Caption Text  Multiple companies used the same water source to transport logs to the mill. They followed a code of honor if a log was delivered to the wrong mill. The mill proceeded with processing the wood but paid the rightful owner of the log.

This brand is from Lutcher Moore Lumber Company in Orange, Texas.
[45 words; 6.2 grade level]

Panel 3-13

Object 3-3  Branded Cross Section
1977.286.0003

Caption Title  Branded Cross Section
Caption Text  Workers hammered the brand into the wood instead of heating the metal and burning the log.

This brand was registered to Walter J. Wingate in 1882.
Donated by Victor Hamilton.
[28 words; 7.9 grade level]

Panel 3-14
Title Roads
Text Mule or oxen-pulled wagons were common. The Martin Wagon’s eight wide wheels distributed the weight of the heavy log-loaded wagon so it floated over instead of sinking into the muddy roads.

As the roads improved, sawmill companies increasingly relied on log trucks to transport the logs. Large 18-wheelers still carry log loads from the woods to the mill today.
[61 words; 7.7 grade level]

Panel 3-15
Document 3-4 Photograph 1992.004.0003
Caption Title Martin Wagon Co.
Caption Text The Martin Wagon Co. operated in Lufkin, Texas. Lumbermen used wagons extensively in areas that were too small for a logging railroad. The flexible U joint in the middle allowed the front and back sections to twist independently.

Donated by Bob Ruby.
[40 words; 9.0 grade level]
Panel 3-16

Document 3-5  Photograph 1901.554.0002

Caption Title  Traveling Down the Road

Caption Text  These log trucks with Martin Wagon Co. trailers are loaded with logs and headed to the mill.
[19 words; 7.3 grade level]

Panel 3-17

Object 3-4  Martin Wagon 1976.018.0001

Caption Title  Martin Wagon

Caption Text  Donated by Temple Industries.

Panel 3-18

Document 3-6  Photograph 1990.014.0009

Caption Title  Mules at Work

Caption Text  Oxen and mules were the animals of choice to work in the woods pulling wagons or skidders. Once the mules retired, some companies released them into town. They roamed the streets, slept in front of the company store, and left manure everywhere.

Donated by Mrs. James Hutto.
[44 words; 5.5 grade level]
### Panel 3-19

**Document 3-7**  
Photograph  
2012.011.0109  

**Caption Title**  
Unloading the Logs  

**Caption Text**  
After the logs arrived at the mill, they floated in the millpond until it was time for the mill. These two men guide the logs from the railcar to the pond.  

Donated by Mike Williams.  
[40 words; 5.8 grade level]

**Transportation Sub-Exhibit Total Word Count:** 523 words

### Section 4  
**Working in a Sawmill**

#### Panel 4-1

**Title**  
Working in a Sawmill  
[4 words]

#### Panel 4-2

**Title**  
Logs to Lumber  

**Text**  
Take a journey through the sawmill jobs as men turn logs into lumber.  
[14 words; 5.0 grade level]

#### Panel 4-3

**Document 4-1**  
Postcard  
2016.007.0004
Caption Title   Sawmill Postcard  
Caption Text   This postcard shows an aerial drawing of Angelina County Lumber Co. in Lufkin, Texas. The buildings are labeled with their purpose.  
[23 words; 7.8 grade level]

Panel 4-4

Document 4-2   Build Plan  
1990.015.0099  
Caption Title   Build Plan  
Caption Text   This is the back end elevation build plan for the Peavy-Moore Lumber Company sawmill in Deweyville, Texas. Lufkin Foundry & Machine Company created the plan in 1922.  
Donated by Art Nelson.  
[28 words; 10.9 grade level]

Panel 4-5

Title   Scalers  
Text   As the log traveled from the millpond into the sawmill, scalers made the initial decision on how to cut the log. They also watched for metal objects imbedded in the wood.  
[32 words; 7.2 grade level]

Panel 4-6

Object 4-1   Book  
1992.033.0001  
67
Caption Title
Instruction for Scalers

Caption Text
The book has tables for scalers to easily decide what sizes of boards can be cut based on the size of the log. The Kirby Lumber Co. produced this book.

Donated by Finis Predergast.
[32 words; 6.1 grade level]

Panel 4-7

Title
Dangerous Job

Text
Sawing a log containing metal objects was the greatest fear of working in a sawmill. Metal could shear off a band saw’s teeth, ruin a blade, or fly out and injure the workers.

In 1933, replacing a band saw blade cost $300.
[43 words; 6.7 grade level]

Panel 4-8

Title
Block Setters

Text
Block setters turned the log to the perfect cutting position. The block setter and the sawyer worked as a team.
[21 words; 4.2 grade level]

Panel 4-9

Document 4-3
Photograph
1988.034.0021
Johnnie Battles was a block setter for Keltys Lumber Co. in Angelina County.

Donated by Monte Morgan.

[15 words; 9.9 grade level]

Sawyers cut the logs into boards. They quickly determined the best way to cut the log to produce the highest value lumber. Sawyers worked in a screened stall to shield them from flying debris.

Today this job title is named a gang saw operator.

[45 words; 6.1 grade level]

The sawyer is preparing to saw lumber for Lutcher Moore Lumber Co. in Orange, Texas. Circa 1910.

Donated by Howard Williams.

[17 words; 9.0 grade level]
“Daddy had only an instant to calculate the way to saw the log to get the most out of it in relation to the company’s pending lumber orders before releasing the carriage at blinding speed right into the whirling, screaming saw.”

James Lee, a Sawyer’s son

Panel 4-13
Title A Noisy Job
Text “There’s so much noise, see. You could go right up to some men, and after you watch a while you realize that they’re moving their hands ever once in a while. And then someone would start laughing...You could convey anything by signs.”

Arthur Beale, kiln brick salesman

Panel 4-14
Title Hand Signals
Text Finger Touch to Nose: “I don’t know.”

Finger Touch to Ear: “I can’t hear you”

Panel 4-15
Title Edger Man
The edger man removed the remaining bark edges and cut the block into planks.
[15 words; 6.7 grade level]

At the Angelina County Lumber Company in Keltys, Bill Griffin edges a board while the next man waits to trim.
Donated by Monte Morgan.
[20 words; 10.6 grade level]

The trimmer-saw man cut the board into exact lengths.
At Wiergate Lumber Company in Newton County, he was one of the highest paid black employees for the company. However, non-white workers made less money than white workers overall.
[39 words; 8.2 grade level]
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Panel 4-19</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Title</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Text</strong></td>
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<table>
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<td><strong>Document 4-7</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Caption Title</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Caption Text</strong></td>
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<table>
<thead>
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<th>Panel 4-21</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Title</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Text</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Panel 4-22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Document 4-8</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Caption Title</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Caption Text</strong></td>
</tr>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Panel 4-23</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Title</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Text</strong></td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Panel 4-24</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Document 4-9</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Caption Title</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Caption Text</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Donated by Howard Williams.
[17 words; 9.0 words]

Panel 4-25

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Object 4-2</th>
<th>Molder-Planer Machine 1976.021.0001</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Caption Title</td>
<td>Molder-Planer Machine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caption Text</td>
<td>This machine smoothed rough-sawn lumber so that the timber was ready for market. This machine also shaped the timber into tongue and groove siding. Donated by Temple Industries. [26 words; 7.1 grade level]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Panel 4-26

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Women in the Mill</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Text</td>
<td>Women rarely worked in the mill before World War II. However, in 1870, the Amsler and Burns mill in Montgomery County employed 12 men and 2 women as mill hands for 6 months. [34 words; 8.7 grade level]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Panel 4-27

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Race in the Mill</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Text</td>
<td>Opportunities for African Americans varied from mill to mill. At the Michelli mill in Angelina County, ¾ of the 300 employees were black (c. 1900).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
At the Manning mill, also in Angelina County, only ¼ of the workforce was black. Manning’s records also noted 14 immigrant Italians and 21 immigrant Mexicans (c. 1910).

Panel 4-28

Title Unfireables

Text There was no substitute for natural mechanical skill. Some jobs were too important to lose workers to high turnover. For example, companies considered saw filers, sawyers, and highly skilled engineers unfireables if they were great at their job.

Panel 4-29

Title Unionization

Text In the early 1900s, the Brotherhood of Timber Workers gained support from both black and white laborers. It championed shorter and less-demanding workdays. The union wanted to get rid of required doctor fees, excessively high commissary prices, and high rent for company houses.

The sawmill industry adamantly opposed the union’s demands.

Panel 4-30

Object 4-3/5 Blacksmith Tongs
1988.024.0003
Blacksmith Tongs

The blacksmith worked both at the sawmill and for area families. He used anvils, hammers, tongs, etc. to repair equipment and keep animals shod.

Donated by Ivan Dodd.
[26 words; 7.1 grade level]

Grinding Stone

The blacksmith sharpened bladed tools like axes, knives, and plows with this grinding stone.
[16 words; 6.8 grade level]

There were many jobs aside from the front camp or sawmill. Workers could be:

- Mill Managers
- Accountants
- Commissary Managers
- Clerks
- Doctors
- Postmasters
- Timekeeper

[24 words; 3.8 grade level]
Panel 4-33

Document 4-10  Photograph
1978.513.0001

Caption Title  The Company Office

Caption Text  Employees of the Carter Kelly Lumber Company in Manning, Texas work at their desks. Circa 1920. [16 words; 6.7 grade level]

Panel 4-34

Title  Women in the Office

Text  Some women worked fulltime or part-time for the Company. They were employed as clerks or secretaries for the mill office or commissary.

Mrs. Phonecia Dickers served as a postmistress for Woodrow in Hardin County. [35 words; 7.8 grade level]

Panel 4-35

Document 4-11  Photograph
1989.018.0318

Caption Title  Women at Work

Caption Text  In 1917, three women work in the accounting office of Kirby Lumber Co. in Houston, Texas. [18 words; 11.7 grade level]
Panel 4-36

Object 4-7  Timekeeper’s Desk  1980.481.0001

Caption Title  Timekeeper’s Desk

Caption Text  Wood McMullen used this desk while working for San Augustine Lumber Company in 1919. He carried it with him when he left to work for the Angelina County Lumber Company at Keltys, in Tyler County, and Polk County. His office moved each time the logging operation moved.

Donated by Wood McMullen.
[49 words; 9.3 grade level]

Panel 4-37

Object 4-8  Payroll Ledger  1980.481.0002

Caption Title  Payroll Ledger

Caption Text  In the 1920s, John Broderick was the timekeeper and used this ledger for the San Augustine Lumber Company.

Donated by Wood McMullen.
[20 words; 12.0 grade level]

Panel 4-38

Object 4-9  Saw Sharpener  1986.016.0001

Caption Title  Saw Sharpener

78
Caption Text

The saw filer who operated the saw sharpener was nicknamed “The Dentist” because the points on a blade are called the teeth.

This sharpener worked at the W.T. Carter sawmill in Manning, Texas.

Donated by Duane Peterson.
[35 words; 8.7 grade level]

Panel 4-39

Object 4-10  Steam Engine
1985.992.0001

Caption Title  Steam Engine

Caption Text  The steam engine powered the whole mill. If the steam engine was running, all the other machines, like the saw sharpener or planer, could work.

The engine was powered with steam. The red balls at the top of the engine are called a governor. They kept the machine from spinning out of control.

Donated by The Ogletree Family.
[55 words; 4.3 grade level]

Panel 4-40  Insider’s Note

Document 4-12  Photograph
Museum Records

Caption Title  Insider’s Note
Steam Engine
When the Ogletree Family donated the steam engine in 1985, there was no history wing. The steam engine was installed and the room was built around it! [29 words; 8.3 grade level]

Working in the Sawmill Sub-Exhibit Total Word Count: 1,144 words

### Section 5  
Life in a Sawmill Town

#### Panel 5-1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Life in a Sawmill Town</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[5 words]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Panel 5-2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>What are Sawmill Towns?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Text</td>
<td>Workers lived with their families in company-owned towns near the sawmill. The towns included homes, stores, doctors, and churches – almost anything found in non-mill towns. [26 words; 8.9 grade level]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Panel 5-3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Document 5-1</th>
<th>Photograph</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1986.005.3236</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Caption Title</th>
<th>Rusk County Residents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Caption Text</td>
<td>In 1908, Russ Muckleroy sat beside his mother, Charlotte Semple, on the front porch of their home. They lived near the Thompson &amp; Tucker Lumber Company mill in Rusk County.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Panel 5-4

Title
Employee Housing

Text
Each mill provided employee housing for rent. From 1880 to 1930, most homes were of unpainted clapboard construction with no indoor plumbing or electricity.

Panel 5-5

Document 5-2
Photograph
1996.011.0059

Caption Title
Housing Rows

Caption Text
This was Frost-Johnson Lumber Company's row of mill houses in Nacogdoches.

Panel 5-6

Title
Personal Story: Housing

Text
“The first house I lived in was a little box house, and I think we paid something like three or four dollars a month.”

Robert L. Weeks, Diboll

[31 words; 8.3 grade level]

[25 words; 9.5 grade level]

[13 words; 10.3 grade level]

[29 words; 7.8 grade level]
Panel 5-7

Title Housing Segregation

Text In 1935, the Delta Land Lumber Company in Montgomery County owned fifty-seven houses for white families that rented for $9.26 per month. There were forty houses for black families that rented for $4.33 per month.

Black workers had worse living conditions than white workers.

[45 words; 10.9 grade level]

Panel 5-8

Document 5-3 Photograph
1986.005.3231

Caption Title Sawmill House

Caption Text Russ Muckleroy, his wife, four children, and one grandchild posed in front of their house in 1908. Circa 1908.

Donated by John Thompson.

[19 words; 5.5 grade level]

Panel 5-9

Title Single Employees

Text Workers without families lived in the hotel or boarding house. Companies built separate hotels for segregation. Deweyville had different buildings for Anglos, African Americans, and Hispanics.
The company employed a mill town doctor to take care of the workers and their families. He tended to minor injuries like cuts and major injuries like the loss of a limb. He also delivered the babies in town.
Dr. Bryan’s Medical Equipment

Dr. Bryan used these tools in his practice.

1) Bircher Ultrasonic Treatment Instrument
2) Centrifuge
3) Vollrath Irrigation Enema
4) Enamelware Bedpan
5) Enamelware Medical Pan
6) Enamelware Measuring Cup
7) Irrigator
8) Childbirth Forceps
9) Ether Mask
10) Reflex Hammer
11) Retractor
12) Nasal Speculum
13) Electric Stimulator
14) Syringe

[39 words; 2.4 grade level]

Title
Doctor Fee

Text
Before the workers received their paychecks, the company took a fee out for the doctor. In the early 1900s, workers made $2.00 a day working for the mill and paid $1.25 per month to the doctor.

[37 words; 9.8 grade level]
### Panel 5-14

**Title**  
Diseases in Town

**Text**  
In 1903, the Kirby Lumber Company's sawmill town, Silsbee, had an outbreak of typhoid and smallpox. The doctor ordered mothers to keep their children inside to prevent getting infected by the germs from the pine coffins on the way to the cemetery.

At times, disease outbreaks threatened to shut down mill operations.  
[53 words; 9.7 grade level]

### Panel 5-15

**Title**  
Women's Work at Home

**Text**  
Women worked constantly to keep their family's lives in order. Limited income discouraged hiring help or buying laborsaving devices. Here are some of their jobs:
- Preparing Food
- Tending the Vegetable Garden
- Milking the Cow
- Watching over the Chickens
- Caring for Children
- Washing and Ironing Clothes

[46 words; 10.1 grade level]

### Panel 5-16

**Title**  
Cornbread Whistle

**Text**  
Women cooked every meal from scratch. Most families had biscuits with breakfast and cornbread with lunch.
Each work day, a whistle would blow before lunch to alert women to start making the cornbread for the men’s return home.
[39 words; 5.8 grade level]

Panel 5-17
Title Church
Text Company owners varied on how much they encouraged religion but few operated on Sundays. Most towns hosted a union church. This meant that churchgoers listened to whichever traveling pastor came to them that Sunday – Baptist, Methodist, etc.
[34 words; 8.2 grade level]

Panel 5-18
Document 5-5 Photograph 1986.005.1026
Caption Title Union Church
Caption Text This was the Willard Union Church in 1908. It was for the Thompson & Tucker Lumber Company in Trinity County.
Donated by John Thompson.
[21 words; 11.1 grade level]

Panel 5-19
Title Hats on Sunday
Text “Back then, you didn’t go into church without a hat on your head.”
Icie Waltman
A commissary worker made plain straw hats and customers dressed them up with ribbons, feathers, etc. [32 words; 5.9 grade level]

<table>
<thead>
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87
Gayle Arnett taught at the Sulphur Springs School. The school was in Camp Nancy, which was a logging camp for the Angelina County Lumber Company.

Donated by O. M. Wood.

[27 words; 6.7 grade level]

Panel 5-23
Title Higher Education
Text Carmona in Polk County held public school from 1st to 6th grades. For additional education, students transferred to nearby Groveton.

Most boys did not earn a high school diploma because they quit school to work in the sawmill. Girls were more likely to finish their education.

[48 words; 6.7 grade level]

Panel 5-24
Title Segregated Schools
Text Just like most facilities in mill towns, the schools were segregated. Black students used the worn out textbooks of the white students.

[23 words; 5.3 grade level]

Panel 5-25
Title Commissary
Text The commissary was the only store for the sawmill town. Much like superstores today, it carried everything. Here are some of the store's departments: post office, mill check office, grocery, animal feed,
hardware, drugstore, doctor’s office, meat market, men’s and ladies’ wear, and ice house.
[46 words; 9.1 grade level]

Panel 5-26
Document 5-8 Photograph
1987.011.0001
Caption Title Commissary Exterior
Caption Text Floyd Hubbard, John Blackwell, Jess Barfield, Earnest Adkinson, and Bob Beddingfield stood on the porch of the Angelina County Lumber Company commissary in Keltys, Texas.
Donated by Bobby Beddingfield.
[27 words; 12.0 grade level]

Panel 5-27
Document 5-9 Photograph
1997.003.0027
Caption Title Commissary Interior
Caption Text The interior of the Wiergate commissary offered a variety of merchandise.
Donated by Dr. James Conrad.
[13 words; 12.0 grade level]

Panel 5-28
Object 5-15 McCaskey Account Safe
1988.009.0001
Caption Title  
McCaskey Account Safe

Caption Text  
This account safe operated in the Todd Mercantile in Anderson County. Each family had a charge account, and the commissary worker wrote the transactions on slips of paper.

On loan from Lamar Roberson.
[30 words; 9.9 grade level]

Panel 5-29

Object 5-16  
Grocery Scale  
1987.044.0001

Caption Title  
Grocery Scale

Caption Text  
In the commissary, most food was not prepackaged. Customers bought food by price per weight.

Donated by Gene Brookshire.  
[17 words; 5.0 grade level]

Panel 5-30

Object 5-17  
Cash Carrier  
1993.022.0001

Caption Title  
Cash Carrier

Caption Text  
Coins went inside the carrier and paper clipped underneath. The commissary worker on the floor sent the carrier along the wire through the office window on the second floor. The store manager kept all of the money in the office.

Donated by Jay Morrison.  
[42 words; 7.0 grade level]
### Panel 5-31

**Object 5-18**  
Bean Counter  
1987.007.0001

**Caption Title**  
Bean Counter

**Caption Text**  
The drawers held different types of beans. It was used in feed stores and grocery stores.

Donated by Howard Walker.  
[18 words; 3.6 grade level]

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### Panel 5-32

**Title**  
Social Saturdays

**Text**  
Saturday was the big day at the commissary. Families did their shopping for the week and took time to socialize with their neighbors.  
[24 words; 6.2 grade level]

---

### Panel 5-33

**Title**  
Sawmill Tokens

**Text**  
Many companies paid their workers with company currency. These tokens were only redeemable within a company transaction like at the commissary or doctor’s office. Tokens were metal or cardboard.

This token practice made it difficult for families to move to another town where their money was no good. The tokens could be exchanged for U.S. dollars but it took time and a fee.  
[64 words; 8.0 grade level]
Panel 5-34

Objects 5-19/28

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<td>1998.030.0001</td>
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</table>

Caption Title  

Sawmill Tokens

Caption Text  

These tokens are from the following companies:
1) Session Lumber Company
2) Angelina County Lumber Company
3) W.T. Carter & Brothers Lumber Company
4) Kirby Lumber Company
5) H.G. Bohlsen Manufacturing Company
6) Southern Pine Lumber Company
7) B.L. Zeagler Lumber Company
8) Haslam Lumber Company
9) Thompson & Tucker Lumber Company
10) Aldridge Lumber Company
[46 words; 0.0 grade level]

Panel 5-35

Title  

Baseball

Text  

Most sawmill towns had a baseball team. Residents gathered to watch while teams played each other. Village Mills tried football. It did not catch on because
most agreed they preferred the more noble sport of baseball.
[37 words; 4.6 grade level]
Caption Text  
Martha Lee and her friend posed for a photograph before diving into a swimming pond. Martha was the daughter of the Wiergate manager.

Donated by Dr. James Conrad.  
[25 words; 7.2 grade level]

Panel 5-39

Document 5-12  
Photograph  
1997.003.0001

Caption Title  
Movie Theater

Caption Text  
The movie theater in the Wiergate community center was segregated. White people sat on the ground floor and black people sat in the balcony.

Donated by Dr. James Conrad.  
[26 words; 8.0 grade level]

Panel 5-40

Object 5-31  
Post Office Window  
1996.065.0001

Caption Title  
Post Office Window

Caption Text  
This was the post office window for W.T. Carter & Brothers Lumber Company in Manning, Texas.

Donated by Robert Flournoy.  
[17 words; 10.4 grade level]

Life in a Sawmill Town Sub-Exhibit Total Word Count: 1,201 words
### Section 6

#### Decline of Sawmill Boom Era

**Panel 6-1**

**Title**
Decline of Sawmill Boom Era  
[5 words]

---

**Panel 6-2**

**Title**
End of an Era

**Text**
At the highest point in 1907, Texas mills produced 2.25 billion board feet of lumber. However by 1930, annual production had fallen to less than 500 million board feet.

There are several reasons for this decline.  
[37 words; 9.5 grade level]

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**Panel 6-3**

**Title**
Cut-and-Get-Out Philosophy

**Text**
From 1880 to 1930, most companies operated on a cut-and-get-out philosophy. This meant when all the trees were cut, the company moved to new land to begin again. This provided little stability to an established town.

T.L.L. Temple with Southern Pine Lumber Company in Diboll was one of the first who had the foresight to replant. This philosophy provided the company with a renewable resource.  
[62 words; 9.6 grade level]
Panel 6-4

Document 6-1  Photograph  1986.005.4490
Caption Title  Cutover Land
Caption Text  After the trees were cut down, the flatheads would move to the next area. This photograph was taken in Jefferson County in 1908.  
[25 words; 7.2 grade level]

Panel 6-5

Title  Fire
Text  Running a sawmill was dangerous and they frequently caught on fire. It was expensive to rebuild and if there were not enough trees to justify the expense, the company moved on or ceased to exist.

Some suspicious fires occurred right before the company ran out of trees to cut. The company collected insurance money for the disaster but it was a noticed convenience in timing.  
[66 words; 8.9 grade level]

Panel 6-6

Document 6-2  Photograph  1991.001.0009a
Caption Title  Mill on Fire
The Carter Kelly Lumber in Manning, Texas caught on fire in 1916.
[14 words; 9.2 grade level]

Great Depression

The sawmills that survived until the 1930s had difficulty making it through the Great Depression. The price of lumber fell below what it cost to produce it.

Many mills declared bankruptcy but some operated on half time to keep as many workers employed as possible.
[46 words; 9.1 grade level]

Affect on Lufkin

When the Long Bell Lumber Company closed in 1930, it left a void in the city. 250 men lost their jobs. It was difficult to find new work because of the Great Depression.
[34 words; 5.4 grade level]

Moving Forward

Former lumber company owners, Ernest Kurth, Arthur Temple, and Simon Henderson opened the Southland
Paper Mill in 1938. During the 20th century, the paper mill became one of Lufkin’s leading industries.

Step into the next room to learn more about the Southland Paper Mill.
[45 words; 12.0 grade level]

Decline of a Sawmill Boom Era Sub-Exhibit Total Word Count: 334 words

Project Total Word Count: 4,082 words
CONCLUSION

The Texas Forestry Museum is the only forestry museum in the state. The Sawmill Town History Wing is the Texas Forestry Museum’s largest permanent exhibit, and it presents Texas’s forest industry history from 1880 to 1930. However, America’s forest industry began much earlier in the seventeenth century in New England. Early settlers used trees for furniture, houses, fuel, and tools, so cutting them down was for necessity. By the eighteenth century, teams of crews worked to fell trees and saw them into lumber for profit, and the forest industry truly gained a foothold in America. The country had an abundance of trees, so once the trees were cut in one area, loggers moved to different parts of the country.

Advances in transportation and technology propelled the industry, which made it easier to move west. By the nineteenth century, loggers established a forest industry in the Midwest by cutting the trees from the Great Lakes south through the Ozarks. Both the steamboat and the railroad were key to logging success in the interior. By using a combination of trains and rivers, lumber cut from remote forests could supply the prairie states.

In the late nineteenth century, loggers moved south after production slowed in the Midwest. From Virginia to East Texas, loggers hauled logs out of the Southern pine belt to sawmills by rivers, rails, and roads. About the same time, the forest
industry entered the forests of the Pacific Coast, which opened the industry to markets across the ocean. The Great Depression affected America’s economy and also strained the forest industry causing many mills across the country to close.

The Texas Forestry Museum’s old Sawmill Town History Wing presented the history of the bonanza period of sawmill history in Texas at the end of the nineteenth century and beginning of the twentieth century. Hundreds of sawmills were established during this period in East Texas.¹ Sawmill company employees worked to turn logs into lumber at the front camps and in the mill. The employees and their families lived in company-owned segregated towns that usually had a doctor, post office, and commissary. The exhibit was outdated and needed a new design plan based on current best practices. By making changes in the flow, panel aesthetics, content, and interactive elements, this exhibit will more effectively communicate the message.

The Sawmill Town History Wing was an open-concept room with only one entrance/exit. According to Erin McClelland, this did not provide visitors with a clear understanding of how to explore the room.² By creating an introductory area, a separate exit to more exhibits, and directional signage, this will provide a more workable flow to the room.

The panel aesthetics in the old Sawmill Town History Wing were close to current best practices but it is important to make these changes, which will provide a better experience for the visitor. Unified font styles, sizes, and height on the walls through the exhibit create a more cohesive look and ensure the text is readable by most visitors. Also, adding captions to all photographs and artifacts contributes to the visitors’ overall understanding. Limiting the word count and regulating the reading level of each panel take into consideration the visitors’ speed of exploring the exhibit. Panel aesthetics is about making sure the content is presented in a way that makes it easy for the visitor to understand.

The content of the old Sawmill Town History Wing focused too much on the technical process of the jobs and not the people who performed them. The new Sawmill Town History Wing brings a more personal experience into the message with quotes from people who lived during the period and a point of view shift. Instead of presenting the sawmill jobs to describe how logs become lumber, the new Sawmill Town History Wing presents the information by job title in order to connect the visitor to the people who performed the tasks. Also, race was only occasionally mentioned in the old Sawmill Town History Wing. The new exhibit addresses segregation and how it affected those working in the mill and living in the company-owned town. The content is the most important part of the exhibit because it presents the history message to the visitors.
The interactive elements in the old Sawmill Town History Wing will be kept in the new exhibit like the Camden documentary and sawmill doctor play area, however, more will be added to boost the visitor’s experience. Period music played over the room will add ambiance without distracting visitors who are reading. A craft where visitors can create their own mill brand will provide visitors with a take-home souvenir. A supplementary oral history with headphones provides a deeper, more personal layer of history for visitors. These interactive elements help visitors have a more memorable experience by engaging more of their senses and providing more personal connections.

Moving forward, there will be three decisions to make as the new design plan is implemented. First, there are many specific forestry terms used in the exhibit unfamiliar to the casual visitor. A terminology pamphlet or panel will help visitors understand the message more fully. Second, when making the final decision about exhibit photographs, quality will be one of the most important deciding factors. I will not display photographs that will not provide a clear image of the subject. Donors trust the museum to utilize their photographs; therefore, the museum’s collection takes priority. I must first search the museum’s collection for appropriate photographs. However, if a good quality image cannot be found, the search will be widened to the East Texas Research Center, The History Center in Diboll, the Library of Congress, or other repositories. Finally, pre and post-evaluations will be
conducted to determine the successes and limitations of the exhibits. Visitors will complete a survey after visiting the old Sawmill Town History Wing, and these findings will be compared to an additional survey that visitors can complete once the new Sawmill Town History Wing is finished. Hopefully, the findings will show the new Sawmill Town History Wing provides a better understanding of sawmill history, a deeper connection to the residents of sawmill towns, and a more entertaining, interactive experience for all visitors.

There are areas of study that need to be researched further. Race, class, gender, and labor are not explored enough because there are not enough primary or secondary sources to provide adequate substance. Research into all of these areas would take an in-depth project in itself. This is a public history project about recreating an exhibit, and I did not have the space to give each of these topics the proper focus needed. Hopefully, by the time this exhibit can be implemented, more research has been done so I can integrate the material into the exhibit.

This thesis provides a plan for the new exhibit but this is only the first step. In order to move forward with the project, funds must be raised. I am going to make sure the new exhibit is produced with quality and longevity in mind, so implementing the plan this large will take a lot of money. Also, the Texas Forestry Museum Board of Trustees will be involved in choosing an exhibit design company and/or contractor as well as approving the final text. Depending on the cost and
how long it takes to fundraise, the new Sawmill Town History Wing will be implemented within two or three years of this thesis.

All of the changes in flow, panel aesthetics, content, and interactive elements make the Sawmill Town History Wing a more functional exhibit. An estimated 7,500 people visited the museum in 2016. The Texas Forestry Museum is the only forestry museum in Texas so it is its responsibility to present an accurate, engaging, understandable, and memorable experience for the thousands of people who walk through the door to learn about Texas' forest history. Lord and Lord wrote, “exhibitions succeed if they educate visitors about their subject matter, and fail if they do not.” It is important for the Texas Forestry Museum to provide good exhibits about Texas forest history because that is the only topic the museum covers.

The logging boom and decline from 1880 to 1930, changed the landscape and affected the history of Texas. This story is best told by adhering to the current best practices established by public history professionals. These standards guide designers to create exhibits that are attractive, readable, accessible, entertaining, and based on quality historical research.

The forest industry is still a strong contributor to the Texas economy. According to the Texas A&M Forest Service, “During the past decade, the wood-

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3 “Visitor Log Book” (Lufkin, TX: Texas Forestry Museum, 2016).
based industry has remained one of the top ten manufacturing sectors in the state.”

It is important for the museum to protect the history of an industry that is still influential in the economy and society in the twenty-first century because connections can be made between the past and present to affect the future.

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5 Omkar Joshi, Chris Edgar, Rebekah Zehnder, and A. Burl Carraway, “Economic Impact of the Texas Forest Sector, 2012” (College Station, TX: Texas A&M Forest Service, 2014), 9.
## APPENDIX A: LIST OF EXHIBIT IMAGES

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