



## Hi, we're Understory

and we illuminate lesser-known aspects of history and the natural world through storytelling and works of art.

We're a burgeoning woman-owned company with a love for localized stories from smaller communities and sites.

We specialize in interpretive planning and exhibit creation, with services including custom illustration, visitor evaluation, and label writing. Our network of talented designers, fabricators, and other folks helps bring our interpretive experiences to life.





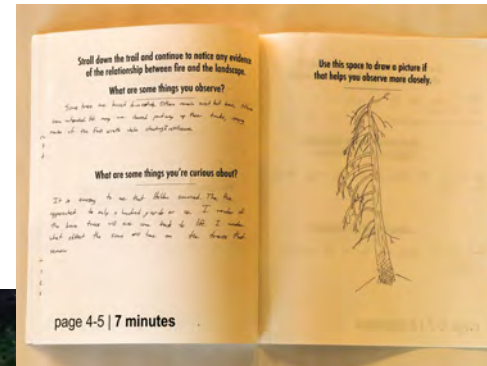
# INTERPRETING FIRE AT HOLDEN VILLAGE

Holden Village, Washington

Holden Village, a remote wilderness community, was nearly ravaged by fire in 2015. Evidence of the burn surrounds the village today, leaving visitors wondering about fire in the area. In 2022, Angela and Laura came to Holden to lead a series of workshops on interpretive planning, resulting in stories and concepts for a fire-themed interpretive trail.

## SERVICES

- Interpretive planning workshop facilitation
- Visitor evaluation





## ROOT TOWERS

Saint Louis Science Center, Missouri

This outdoor exhibit shows how roots' "hidden powers" help life on Earth thrive. Visitors crawl through tunnels to observe growing roots, see microscopic imagery, and discover cutting edge research in root biology. Angela created these towers alongside many scientists and artists.

### SERVICES

- Interpretive planning
- Content development
- Interpretive writing
- Coordination with scientists and artists
- Visitor evaluation
- Illustration





# JASON BEACH WAYSIDE SERIES

Trap Pond State Park, Delaware



The local Black community's deep ties to a formerly-segregated beach in Trap Pond State Park lay quiet for generations. On Juneteenth 2022, Governor John Carney and Delaware State Parks unveiled a historic marker and three waysides commemorating the site's importance, and formally renaming the site to Jason Beach. Laura managed the production of the waysides — from interpretive planning to installation — working closely with community members and park staff.

This project won a 2023 Interpretive Media Award from the National Association for Interpretation.

## SERVICES

- Interpretive planning
- Consultation with community members and content experts
- Content development
- Interpretive writing
- Design direction
- Fabrication coordination
- Coordination of online component featuring oral histories



## COMMUNITY STORIES

For generations, the local Black community made memories at Jason Beach. Locals fondly remember gathering here to socialize, dance, picnic, and attend church services and baptisms.

*"Coming down the dirt road from the highway to the beach, it was just a little narrow dirt road."*

*"If you were clean when you came down, you'd get dirty before you'd get here 'cause it was so dusty."*

— Carl Stanley

*"Back then when it was segregated, the beach on the far side — the white kids played over there, and we played over here [at Jason Beach]."*

*And one of the biggest questions we had was, "I wonder if they're having as much fun over there as we're having over here."*

— Jonathan Kellam

*"We had the jukebox so we would go under the pavilion and dance. And there was good food we got from the concession stand."*

*Sometimes during the summer [we went to Jason Beach] basically every day, every other day, but mostly we went on Sundays after church. That was when the biggest gatherings were."*

— Virginia Sreed

*"I enjoyed Jason Beach because that was a meeting place for the community at large, to meet people from different parts of Sussex County. You would come there and have fun at the beach."*

— Howard West

*"We had a great time at Jason Beach listening to the jukebox and dancing. We played jazz, Lloyd Price and James Brown."*

— Willie Mae Wortham



To learn and read more stories of Jason Beach, scan this QR code.

## SEGREGATION AT TRAP POND STATE PARK

While there was no segregation required by law in Delaware's state park system during the 1950s and 1960s, numerous press accounts and interviews indicate Trap Pond's beach areas were segregated. Jason Beach was for Black visitors; Headquarters Beach (across the pond) was for white visitors.

*"[Coming] from the north, that was sort of a shocker."*  
— Pete Gaidol, Superintendent of Delaware State Parks in 1963, reflecting on segregation at Trap Pond State Park.

### SEPARATE AND UNEQUAL

By the early 1960s, disparities between Jason Beach and Headquarters Beach were evident. Complaints were mounting, and local legislators became concerned.

#### Roads

While the road to Headquarters Beach was paved, the dirt road leading to Jason Beach was full of ruts and often muddy.

#### Amenities

The pavilions, bathhouse, and fireplaces at Headquarters Beach were well-maintained while those at Jason Beach were falling into disrepair.

#### Concessions

While the food concession at Headquarters Beach was in good shape and fully stocked, Jason Beach's was poorly maintained, understocked, and often closed.

*"[Today,] I'm glad we're trying to be as inclusive as we can because then we really have the history of Trap Pond — that everyone enjoyed this, whether we were segregated, and now integrated, that we all enjoyed this beautiful park."*

— Jonathan Kellam, Councilman, Third Ward, Town of Laurel, 2021

### AN UNWELCOMING INCIDENT

In July 1963, three busloads of African American children arrived at Headquarters Beach for a Red Cross Swim Lesson. Park staff turned the children away, noting that the Seafood youth were scheduled for a different week, and canceled all swim lessons for the day. After outcry from the Red Cross, NAACP, and members of the public, the State Park Commission addressed the "non-official" segregation.

*"No area under the jurisdiction of the State Park Commission, including Trap Pond, is or will be administered on a segregated basis."*

— Delaware State Park Commission, 1963

The passage of the federal Civil Rights Act of 1964 underscored the end to segregation at Trap Pond and all other state parks. Even so, the Black community continued to use Jason Beach as their families had done for generations.



Archivists played the records of the incident.

This project could not have been possible without the generous help of records provided by former Park Historian, George Calvert.

To access more historical resources on Jason Beach scan this QR code.



# ALMA CULTURAL LANDSCAPE

Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District, California

Midpen saved a culturally-significant landscape from development, then rehabilitated historic architecture and native ecosystems. Angela built upon Midpen's existing interpretive plan to convey the beauty and meaning of site features like mansion relics and new colonies of bats.

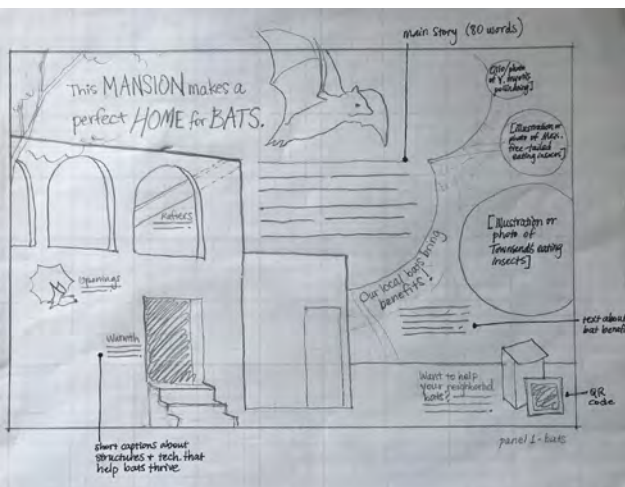
## SERVICES

- Visitor evaluation
- Content development
- Writing/editing
- Historic photo acquisition
- Illustration
- Graphic design
- Fabrication coordination

"The panels are amazing! I particularly love the "home for bats" design where all of the illustrations are exquisite."

Jane Mark, Planning Manager

Below: concept sketch  
Right: final design





# PEDESTRIAN WALKWAY WAYSIDES

## Killens Pond State Park

Laura created a series of waysides for a new ADA-accessible pedestrian bridge at Killens Pond. She worked with park interpreters to implement a front-end survey to better understand visitor interests. She then developed text and images to interpret the pond's natural resources, the milling legacy, and traditional Indigenous uses of the land and water. Principal Chief of the Lenape Indian Tribe of Delaware, Dennis Coker, provided consultation. Laura worked with a local fabricator to install the signage with an eye for narrative flow, cohesion with walkway materials, and compelling sightlines. The bridge opening was the focus of Delaware State Parks' 2021 Earth Day celebrations.

### SERVICES

- Interpretive planning
- Audience evaluation
- Content research and development
- Consultation with Tribes and content experts
- Interpretive writing
- Design direction
- Fabrication and installation direction





# WHITMAN MISSION WAYSIDES

## Whitman Mission National Historic Park

The interpretive waysides at WMNHS were not changed between 1975 and 2023. The signs presented a biased and insensitive perspective of historical conflicts between local Tribes and white settlers.

Park staff worked with members of the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation to rewrite the narrative. Angela managed the design of new waysides and created custom illustrations, in close collaboration with the client team and Tribal representatives.

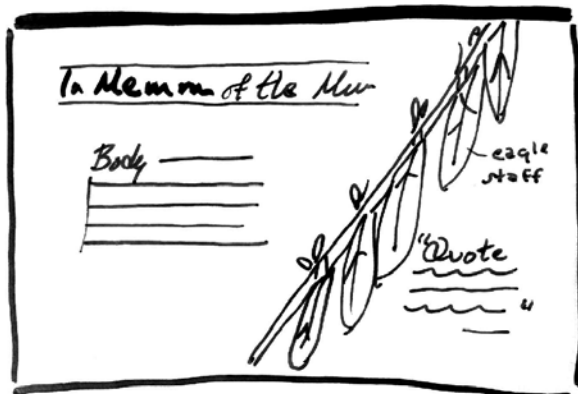
### SERVICES

- Project management
- Illustration and design direction
- Graphic design

“It was so exciting to see and review the panel sketches!”

*Kate Kunkel-Patterson, NPS Park Ranger*

*Below: concept sketch by designer Amity Femia  
Right: final design*



*These five are missing. The story will always be unfinished for me and my family until they find them.*

*Piitamyanon Maqšmāqš (Philip Cash Cash)*



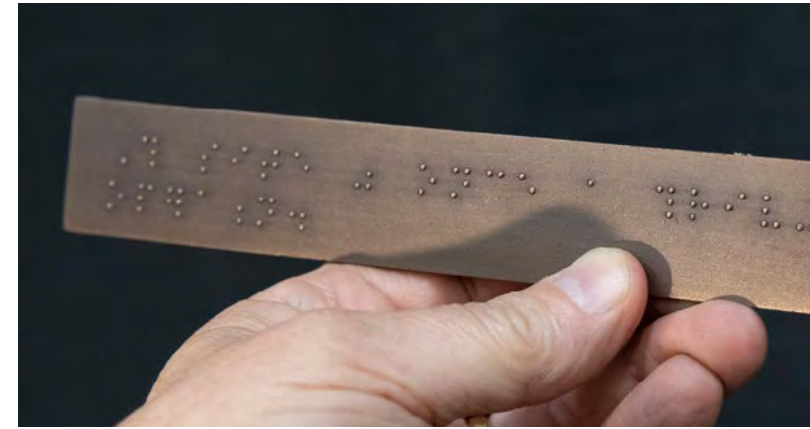
# TACTILE WAYSIDE SERIES

Holts Landing State Park and White Clay Creek State Park, Delaware

New ADA-compliant trails at two state parks were an opportunity to incorporate highly accessible interpretation. Bronze-casted braille, tactile imagery, and QR codes linking to Section 508-conformant pdfs provide robust interpretation for all audiences. Laura managed the production of the six waysides, working with parks' staff, accessibility consultants, and outside contractors.

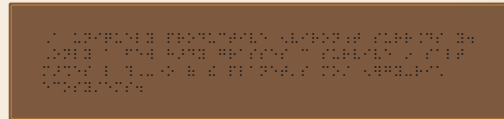
## SERVICES

- Interpretive planning
- Content research and development
- Consultation with accessibility groups
- Interpretive writing
- Design direction
- Fabrication and installation direction



## Power PLANTS

A uniquely productive environment surrounds you. Only a few hardy grasses can survive in salt marshes like this—one of the planet's most energy-rich ecosystems.



Three species of grass dominate tidal salt marshes in Delaware:

Smooth cordgrass, Saltmeadow hay, and the invasive reed, Phragmites. You can identify the three grasses by their textures, sizes, and locations.



### SALTMEADOW HAY

*Sporobolus pumilus*

- Thin, soft, and delicate; grows in dense stands
- Reaches a height of 2 feet, but wind often flattens it in twisting heaps called cowlicks
- Thrives in slightly higher elevations since it can withstand being inundated by saltwater occasionally
- Used in the past as cattle feed, house insulation, and padding in coffins



### SMOOTH CORDGRASS

*Sporobolus alterniflorus*

- Named for its smooth hairless leaves
- Tall form can grow up to five feet tall; short form grows 12 to 18 inches tall
- Typically grows in low-lying areas as it can withstand regularly being inundated by salt water
- Has specialized pores that excrete salt—you can often find crystals on the leaves



### PHRAGMITES

*Phragmites australis*

- Big, thick-stemmed, and bulky
- Grows up to 15-foot tall
- Can be seen on the edge of the wooded area of this marsh
- Is an invasive plant widely distributed across the east coast—it's sprayed each fall to limit its spreading



Scan this QR code for an accessible version of this wayside.

## SEA BEANS

Depending on the season, you may notice pops of color from the plant, glasswort. Vibrant green in summer and bright red in fall, this low marsh succulent is very salt-tolerant. Also known as "sea beans" or "pickleweed," glasswort is edible and was once used in pickling.



Shifting from summer green to fall red, glasswort (*Salicornia virginica*) highlights this marsh.

Left: Graphic for panel design, prior to tactile production.  
Below: Final bronze tactiles.





# WETLANDS AT PUESTA DEL SOL

Sierra-Martin Architects for the Bellevue School District, Washington

A new Spanish immersion elementary school was built on a site containing wetlands near Seattle. The Bellevue School District incorporated the wetland and buffer areas into the new campus design to foster stewardship among students through the curriculum and outdoor learning opportunities. Angela created storybook-like signage to help kids recognize hidden water systems and native plants and animals.

## SERVICES

- Interpretive planning
- Content research & development
- Interpretive writing
- Illustration
- Graphic design





## PARK OFFICE EXHIBIT

### Wilmington State Parks, Delaware

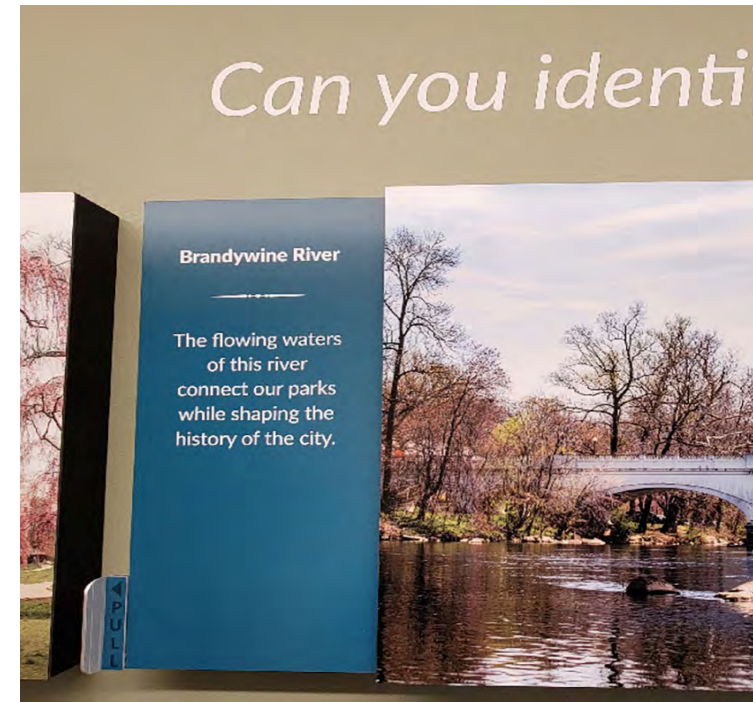
Wilmington State Parks is a series of historic city parks nestled along the Brandywine River. This new park office exhibit brings together the many tracts of the park, sharing cross-generational stories of community connections, and highlighting the park's treasured flora and fauna. Laura managed this entire project — from interpretive planning to installation — working closely with park staff and outside contractors.

#### SERVICES

- Interpretive planning
- Content research and development
- Interpretive writing
- Image sourcing
- Design direction
- Fabrication and installation direction

*Below: Introductory park map exhibit*

*Right: Accessible pull tabs reveal the park's natural features*





## LEONARD ILLUSTRATIONS FOR TITANOBOA EXHIBIT

Burke Museum of Natural History and Culture, Washington

When the Burke Museum hosted the Smithsonian traveling exhibit, *Titanoboa: Monster Snake*, part of the gallery focused on snake research done by the University of Washington. Laura traveled with graduate student, Leonard to the San Juan Islands and Burke Museum research lab to document his research. Her resulting illustrations were featured in the exhibit.





# AUSTRALIAN SLIME MOLD MONOGRAPH

"Secretive Slime Molds: Myxomycetes of Australia" (CSIRO Publishing, 2021)

Working for ecologist Dr. Steve Stephenson, Angela created several dozen illustrations of slime molds (myxomycetes) that are commonly found around the world. The illustrations were published in Stephenson's monograph and used for many public engagement efforts by Angela and others.



Concept sketch for an exhibit about slime molds



*Collaria arcyronema*



*Metatrachia floriformis*



*Trichia varia*