Curator of Historic Agriculture and Transportation

Position Summary

Old World Wisconsin in Eagle, Wisconsin is one of eleven historic sites that are part of the Historic Sites and Museums Division in the Wisconsin Historical Society.

The Curator of Historic Agriculture and Transportation at Old World Wisconsin is a professional museum position with responsibility to oversee all museum activity relating to historic agriculture, the livestock collection, and horse-drawn transportation programs at Old World Wisconsin. This includes the curation, care, training, use and management of historic breed draft horses as well as varying numbers of heritage breed cattle, sheep, swine, geese, and poultry. He or she is responsible for the research and records related to the care and management of the historic livestock collection. He or she also researches, plants, and oversees the raising of historically accurate field crops on ten period farmsteads and independently conducts research of agricultural history for use in interpretive programs. In addition, the Curator of Historic Agriculture and Transportation will work in close collaboration with the Curator overseeing Collections, making recommendations on acquisitions, deaccessions, loans, catalog needs, and care. The curators will jointly manage the storage and ensure proper housing for all collections pertaining to historic agriculture and horse-drawn transportation.

He or she coordinates daily interpretation of nineteenth and early twentieth century agriculture and horse-drawn transportation programs as part of the Old World Wisconsin Guest Experience Team. This includes working collaboratively to plan for daily interpretation, public programs throughout the year. The Curator also maintains the museum’s teaching collection of agricultural artifacts and horse-drawn vehicles. He or she is responsible for modern farm equipment and machinery used for behind-the-scenes farm operations.

In carrying out his/her duties, the Curator of Historic Agriculture and Transportation leads the work of LTE Farm Interpreters, Farm Workers, teamsters and any number of volunteers. He or she must possess strong financial stewardship abilities and an entrepreneurial spirit, generating earned revenue to support historic agriculture and transportation operations. The Curator plays a leadership role in all aspects of the Agriculture and Transportation program including concept development, fundraising, research, testing, staff and volunteer training and evaluation. In addition, the Curator provides professional services to Society staff, other museums, and the general public.

Professional level work is performed under general supervision of Old World Wisconsin’s Curatorial Supervisor - Assistant Director of Guest Experience.
**Goals and Worker Activities**

30%  

A. The Curator of Historic Agriculture and Transportation regularly interacts with Old World Wisconsin's staff and volunteers and contract presenters to provide an exceptional living farm and transportation experience for OWW guests.

A1 Ensures the needs, safety and interests of guests are given first priority. Interpretation is historically accurate but also involves the guest in interaction with farm work or animals and is appropriate to the age and interests of the guest.

A2. Regularly uses guest feedback to evaluate and adjust historic farm and transportation experiences

A3 Ensures historical authenticity of farm and transportation experiences through the use of existing and on-going research. Remain knowledgeable about new interpretations in this field.

A4 Represents historic farming and transportation programs through participation in regular Old World Wisconsin staff planning sessions. Keeps other staff informed of agriculture and transportation projects and programs through participation in staff meetings and email communication.

A5 Provides training for LTE staff and volunteers associated with historic agriculture and transportation programs.

A6 Schedules LTE staff and volunteers interpreters to cover required work stations associated with historic agriculture and transportation.

A7 Develops and maintains relationships with professional and industry organizations, hobby clubs and individuals associated with historic farming and transportation. Collaborates with these to enhance Old World Wisconsin farm and transportation programming and the overall guest experience.

A8 Expands Old World Wisconsin’s educational reach through off-site programming and presentations.

A9 Collaborates with marketing staff to promote and market farming agriculture and transportation experiences.
20% B. The Curator of Historic Agriculture and Transportation oversees the management and care of Old World Wisconsin’s historic livestock breeds.

B1 Researches appropriate breeds of horses, cattle, sheep, swine, poultry and other farm animals for exhibition at Old World Wisconsin taking into consideration the ethnicity, economic status and time period of each farm and the village.

B2 Determines availability and arranges acquisition of appropriate breeds following state procurement procedures.

B3 Assures proper care and feeding of all farm animals, adhering to current standards, while maintaining a nineteenth or twentieth century appearance, and consults with Humane Officer and contract veterinarian as needed.

B4 Trains staff and volunteers in proper care, handling and feeding of animals.

B5 Arranges for purchase of necessary grain and feed in accordance with state purchasing procedures.

B6 Implements a regular exercise and driving program to maintain the health of horses and oxen.

B7 In consultation with the Assistant Director, Guest Experience, determines which animals should be retained, bred, or removed through sale (following state procurement procedures) or butchering for use in living history programs.

B8 Plans and directs all breeding and conservation efforts. Develops and maintains a relationship with the American Livestock Breeds Conservancy and other conservation groups and individuals.

B9 Maintains historic and non-historic fencing associated with animal management and exhibition in collaboration with OWW maintenance staff.
20% C. The Curator of Historic Agriculture and Transportation oversees the planning and management of all Old World Wisconsin field crops and orchards.

C1 Creates annual field and orchard planting and management plans for presentation to and approval by the Curator and Exhibit Developer, Assistant Director, Guest Experience, and Museum Director.

C2 Works with Assistant Director, Guest Experience to establish, document, and monitor short-term goals and work projects.

C3 Directs daily and weekly planning sessions with staff and volunteers.

C4 Reviews existing research reports and performs independent research to determine proper field crops based on the time period and ethnic background of each farm as well as needs for foodways programs and animal consumption.

C5 Prepares soil, plants, cultivates, and harvests based on knowledge of the various crops, weather conditions, and historical accuracy. While some behind-the-scenes work may be done with modern agricultural equipment, any work done during open hours should utilize nineteenth and early twentieth century techniques.

C6 Saves seed from each annual crop for planting the following year when the specific heirloom crop is not commercially available.

15% D. The Curator of Historic Agriculture and Transportation is a good steward of available financial resources and participates in entrepreneurial efforts to support program costs through earned revenue.

D1 Works with the Assistant Director, Guest Experience to create annual operating and special project budgets associated with historic agriculture and transportation programs.

D2 Works with the Assistant Director, Guest Experience and others to identify creative ways to generate earned revenue through historic agriculture and transportation programs.

D3 Participates in efforts to raise funds for historic agriculture and transportation programs through foundation, corporation and
individual support through the Wisconsin Historical Foundation and the Old World Foundation.

D4 Provide behind-the-scenes tours, programs and off-site presentations for potential donors and sponsors.

5% E. The Historic Farming and Transportation Coordinator operates the horse-drawn transportation program as part of the Old World Wisconsin guest experience.

E1 Works with the Assistant Director, Guest Experience and others to develop a horse-drawn transportation program that will be operated in a safe manner and on a consistent schedule as a regular (vs. special event only) component of the Old World Wisconsin guest experience, as well as part of special events and revenue generating activities, like weddings.

E2 Acquires and maintains historic horse-drawn vehicles, harness and other equipment for use as part of the transportation program.

E3 Acquires and maintains horses required for use with the transportation program as part of larger livestock care responsibilities.

E4 Works with the Assistant Director, Guest Experience to recruit, hire and train teamsters.

E5 Oversees the daily operation of a livery stable and other facilities used to support the historic transportation program.

E6 Works with the Business Manager to properly handle and account for revenue collected as part of the historic transportation program.

5% F. The Historic Farming and Transportation Coordinator collaborates with the Curator - Exhibit Developer to acquire, restore deaccession, and/or reproduce artifact horse-drawn vehicles, agricultural implements and tools.

F1 Recommends additional items of artifact farm equipment for acquisition by the museum. Assign values to artifacts in curatorial area of responsibility as required. Develop and maintain knowledge necessary to authenticate and evaluate these objects. Cultivate private collectors, dealers and appraisers for advice regarding evaluation and identification in partnership with the
Curator overseeing Collections.

F2. Visits potential donors, examines equipment and recommends to the Curator overseeing Collections acceptance or refusal of such offers.

F3. Maintain records associated with newly acquired historic breeds or crops as need by preparing clear, concise, and accurate written descriptions.

F4. Recommends to the Curator overseeing Collections the deaccession of any duplicate, inappropriate, or damaged artifacts from the collections. Arrange for the sale or transfer of deaccessioned artifacts following approval by the Curatorial Supervisor.

F5 Coordinates and conducts the reproduction of nineteenth and early twentieth century agricultural implements and tools with the approval of the Curatorial Supervisor.

F6 Assures that teaching collection artifact farm equipment is properly inventoried, maintained and accounted for. This includes horse-drawn plows, harrows, seeders, rakes, binders, mowers, threshing machines, vehicles, etc.

5% G. Performs other duties as assigned.

G1. Attend curatorial staff meetings.

G2. Participate as a member of project and program teams, staff meetings and events as required by the Assistant Director, Guest Experience or Director.

G3. Serve on WHS committees or project teams as requested.

G4. Represent OWW at professional meetings and conferences as requested.

G5. Other duties or responsibilities as assigned by the Assistant Director, Guest Experience or Director.
Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities

1. Knowledge and training in American history in general and expertise in historic agricultural and transportation material culture.
2. Experience in the identification, authentication, and documentation of historical collections in general and of artifacts in area of curatorial responsibility in particular.
3. Ability to use artifacts to interpret the past, including a demonstrated ability to conceptualize, research, and script interpretive museum exhibits dealing with historical topics and themes.
4. Knowledge of and experience with museum educational and communications techniques including: exhibit design label writing, web and multimedia presentation, and the use of artifacts.
5. Broad knowledge of and experience with professional museum practices including collections policies and management standards and procedures.
6. Experience in the use of collections management software.
7. Knowledge of conservation and preservation techniques used for a variety of tools and equipment.
8. Excellent written communications skills; a demonstrated ability to write scholarly and popular articles, exhibit labels, multimedia scripts, exhibit catalogs, and grant proposal narratives.
9. Ability to pass a background security check and to become an employee bonded to deal with valuable collections.
10. Ability to establish goals and objectives, programs and priorities and to develop schedules and staff assignments to obtain desired results for the OWW Historic Farming and Transportation Programs in collaboration with the larger Guest Experience Team.
11. Ability to direct, motivate, and work with staff and volunteers to achieve a necessary goal or objective.
12. Ability to provide good public service to site staff and guests.
13. Ability to develop and manage both operating and personnel budgets to achieve maximum cost-effectiveness with available funds.
14. Sensitivity to historical nature of museum buildings, grounds, equipment and animals.
15. Ability and flexibility to work overtime and weekend hours necessary to meet operational needs of OWW.
16. Effective interpersonal, written and oral communication skills.
17. Physical and legal qualifications to safely operate various site motor vehicles, and maintenance equipment.
18. Ability to lift and carry 50 pounds and have the physical dexterity and flexibility necessary to work as a Historic Farmer.
19. Knowledge of accepted procedures and techniques in historical agriculture.
20. Knowledge of accepted procedures and techniques in animal husbandry.
21. Knowledge of accepted procedures and techniques in the safe operation of horse-drawn transportation.
21. Knowledge of accepted procedures and techniques in customer service and the design and delivery of entertaining and educational guest experiences.
22. Planning and organizational skills.
23. Ability to establish and maintain effective working relationships.
24. Ability to provide courteous and professional customer service.
25. Computer skills, including word and data processing, and internet use.
26. Ability to travel independently within Wisconsin and nationally as necessary.
27. Able to legally operate a motor vehicle from the Wisconsin Department of Administration State Fleet in the State of Wisconsin.