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August 19, 2016

Museum of WWII
8 Mercer Road
Natick, MA 01760

Dear Hiring Committee:

I am pleased to apply for the position of Director of Interpretation. As an experienced museum professional with a passion for history, I have the energy, skills, and vision that this position requires.

My connection to World War II history is deeply personal. On the wall in my office, there is a photographic print depicting the battle of Normandy. As a child growing up in nearby Boston, I frequently begged my mother to take myself and my siblings to the WWII museum every opportunity she could. I would spend countless hours exploring the museum, taking in its exhibits and speaking with the interpreters there. Taken together, these experiences have imbued me with a strong sense of curiosity, place, and purpose. I want to inspire others to feel similarly, and this desire drives the work that I do every day.

To assess one of my greatest professional strengths, I invite you to consider the individuals that our department has hired and trained since 2013. I have worked with my fellow supervisors to hire interpreters who are team-oriented lifelong learners with a passion for people. I took the lead in developing a standard list of interview questions designed to more effectively assess our job applicants. I also have helped to re-organize our interpreter training program to place a greater emphasis on the theory and practice of museum interpretation. I believe these changes have helped improve staff morale and have better equipped our staff to meet the needs of the visiting public.

During the past three years, I also have collaborated in projects that have pushed the museum's programming in exciting new directions. Working closely with our Public Programming Manager, I helped manage the Terra Cotta Warriors Project from start to finish. I played a key role in drafting the position's job application, hiring Mike Williams, and supporting his work throughout the summer. Mike looked to me for project ideas, editorial support with his blog posts, and positive reinforcement. More recently, I am proud of my efforts with the exhibits department to combine STEM concepts and historical study in our Experience Farm. I wrote the exhibit's interpretation manual, developed and led an effective training program, and have supported the exhibits department's efforts to conduct remedial evaluation for the various interactive components in this space. I also have regularly provided hands-on support in identifying and solving technical challenges. These two projects reflect my commitment to not only advancing my own ideas, but supporting the contributions of my colleagues.

As a manager, I am strongly committed to consensus building. While I am relatively new to this organization, my communication skills have allowed me to develop good working relationships with many staff and volunteers. I try to be visible, listen carefully, pose thoughtful questions, and validate different points of view. I also try to use my sense of humor to bring positive energy to the workplace. All of these qualities have served me well as a supervisor and would continue to do so in a more senior position here.

A department head needs to have a clearly-defined vision for the future. When I attended the Developing History Leaders seminar in New Orleans last year, one of our instructors reminded us that "the leader gets to see the future first." I am excited about the possibilities. While a detailed discussion is beyond the scope of this letter, I can suggest some areas where the department should focus its energy:

1. Continue to develop and implement a clearly-defined, merit-based ranking system for interpreters with an emphasis on flexibility and ability to work with a diverse range of visitors. The department needs a more flexible workforce in order to meet the museum's operational needs.
2. Rewrite and update our interpretation handbook library to place a greater emphasis on themes that resonate with 21st-century audiences. We also need to make this library fully digital and accessible online (presently we are about halfway there).
3. Identify and pursue opportunities to enhance the visitor experience for individuals in wheelchairs, as well as the visual and hearing-impaired. This would likely require collaborative work with some external partners.
4. Pursue opportunities that can strengthen the museum's reputation as not just a tourist attraction, but a local community asset. For example, I would like to see Summer Starts! weekend grow into an event that not only attracts visitors, but also could potentially benefit local military families in some meaningful way.

An important caveat to all of these ideas is that I do not view myself as the sole driver of creative thinking within the department. As a director, I would strive to provide an environment in which everyone could feel empowered to experiment with new ideas.

I will be candid about my limitations. I have not been tasked with writing a grant proposal as of yet. I do not have experience with fundraising. I also have not been personally responsible for the oversight of a departmental budget. However, I am humble enough to admit what I do not know. I am willing to ask questions and I am a capable learner. Through the Developing History Leaders Seminar, along with other professional contacts, I have a great network of public history professionals to use for support and input.

During the past three years, I have found this museum to be a welcoming community of people who share my love for history. It feels like more than just a job - it feels like home. I would welcome the opportunity to contribute to this community in a way that goes beyond my current job's scope. The challenges are real, but I am ready to meet them. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Mike Summers

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SUMMARY

Skilled museum educator with ten years of relevant experience, including seven years of supervisory experience in museum and historic site interpretation and two years in college teaching. Additional experience includes exhibit planning, writing and installation.

EDUCATION

Developing History Leaders @ SHA Seminar: New Orleans, LA (2014)

- Certificate of completion

Dartmouth College: Hanover, NH (2010-2012)

- M.A., American History (Public History Concentration)
- Recipient of the Ermonian Award for Excellence in Graduate Teaching

University of Pittsburgh: Pittsburgh, PA (2002-2006)

- B.A., American Studies (minor in American Politics)
- Recipient of the Nancy Norton Prize for History and American Studies

RECENT WORK EXPERIENCE

Supervisor of Interpretation, World War II Museum, Natick, MA

Since March 2013

- Recruit and hire interpreters for both seasonal and year-round positions
- Design and lead the department's training programs for interpretation staff
- Troubleshoot daily museum operations and staffing issues
- Assist with the planning and scheduling of daily interpretive talks and demonstrations for the public
- Manage all aspects of the department's teen volunteer program including scheduling, training, and communications with parents or guardians
- Plan, execute, and evaluate engaging special programs for the visiting public
- Collaborate with the exhibits department to plan upcoming exhibitions and special programs
- Research, write and continually update exhibit-specific training manuals for interpretation staff
- Assist department Director in planning staffing schedules for spring, summer, fall and winter seasons
- Assist department Director in planning the annual departmental payroll budget
- Have and maintain a high level of expertise in best museum practices and public history.

Teaching Assistant, Dartmouth College, Hanover, NH

September 2010-May 2012

- Facilitated three weekly discussion sections for a 100-level history course, each containing twenty students
- Assisted with proctoring exams and quizzes
- Corrected papers, projects, and exams
- Compiled final grades for all students at the end of the semester
- Provided additional one-on-one help to students during office hours

Curatorial Intern, National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum, Cooperstown, NY

June 2011-August 2011

- Conducted photographic documentation of current exhibitions
- Researched and wrote text for *Today's Game* and *Recent Acquisitions* exhibits
- Researched and wrote a 1500-word article for the Hall of Fame's magazine, *Memories and Dreams*
- Assisted with collections database clean-up (Visual Re: Discovery database system)
- Performed interpretive presentations for the public
- Assisted with behind-the-scenes tours of the Hall of Fame's collections

Senior Interpreter and Schools Coordinator, Yale Peabody Museum, New Haven,

September 2006-July 2010

- Recruited interpreters and visitor service staff through web postings, print advertisements, e-mail networks, and attendance of job fairs and conferences
- Led orientation and training for all interpretive and visitor service staff members
- Prepared annual job performance assessments for all interpretive and visitor services staff members
- Maintained work schedule for approximately 35 part-time interpretive and visitor service staff
- Managed resources and supplies
- Planned the department's annual payroll budget
- Facilitated weekly meetings for interpretive and visitor service staff members
- Assisted with the development of enrichment and professional development opportunities for interpretive staff
- Prepared and communicated daily programming schedule for the Museum and historic sites
- Led interpretive tours or presentations and ran cash registers as needed
- Oversaw development and revision of interpretive materials for the Museum and historic sites
- Assisted with planning and implementing educational programs for people of all ages
- Assisted teachers with the planning of field trips to the Museum and historic sites
- Coordinated all group tour visits and maintained group reservations database

Museum Interpreter, Yale Peabody Museum, New Haven, CT

June 2006-September 2006

- Provided factual and engaging tours for the visiting public at three different historic sites and the Whaling Museum
- Collected and tracked daily admissions
- Procured change and supplies as needed
- Provided staffing support for public programs

Intern, State of Maine, Department of Conservation, Bureau of Parks and Lands, Augusta, ME

May 2005-August 2005

Assisted the bureau's Chief Planner with the coordination of a statewide survey evaluating the economic impact of Maine's State Parks and Lands. Primary responsibilities included:

- Assisting in the preparation of survey's materials, including the numbering and stamping of mailing envelopes, and folding / stuffing of individual surveys into mailing envelopes
- Packaging and mailing survey materials to different parks and lands throughout the state
- Reviewing and communicating survey distribution schedules with all park managers
- Traveling to different State Parks to answer questions about the survey and its significance, and assist in distributing surveys on busy days
- Tracking the distribution of survey materials at different parks each week to ensure they were distributed on the properly scheduled days
- Reporting distribution information directly to the consulting firm that had been hired to develop survey (Margaret Chase Smith Center for Public Policy - Orono, Maine)
- Serving as primary communications contact for all survey-related inquiries
- Assisting Chief Planner with other office projects as needed (filing, cleaning, etc.)

EXHIBITION CREDITS

***A Son of Great Barrington: W.E.B. Du Bois*, Fall 2010**

Produced in collaboration with the University of Massachusetts and the Friends of the W.E.B. Du Bois Home Site. It is currently on display in the lobby of the Triplex Theater in Great Barrington, Massachusetts. The exhibit was presented at the 2012 annual meeting of the National Council on Public History. I worked with two other students to write the content, design the exhibit, fabricate the components, and install them.

Today's Game, Summer 2011

Produced by the Curatorial Department at the National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum in Cooperstown, New York. It was on display in the museum until Spring 2012. My primary role in this exhibit was drafting label copy.

Recent Acquisitions, Summer 2011

Produced by the Curatorial Department at the National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum in Cooperstown, New York. It was on display in the museum until Spring 2012. My primary role in this exhibit was drafting label copy.

PUBLICATIONS

- "Baseball: Its Early Beginnings on Nantucket," *Historic Nantucket* 58, no. 3 (2008): pp. 5-9.
- "Presidential Visits to Nantucket: Grant to Wilson," *Historic Nantucket* 60, no. 4 (2010): pp. 4-11.
- "Getting Up to Speed – the History and Development of the Baseball Radar Gun," *Memories and Dreams* 33, no. 6 (2011), pp. 18-21.

PRESENTATIONS

- *A Son of Great Barrington: W.E.B. Du Bois*, presented at the annual meeting for the National Council on Public History in March 2012. The format for this presentation was called a "poster session." I prepared a poster with photographs of the exhibit that I had developed during the 2010-2011 academic year.
- *Building a Healthy Volunteer Community*: A roundtable discussion session held at the annual meeting of the New England Museum Association in 2014. I helped to facilitate a discussion focused specifically on teen volunteer programs.

VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE

Maine Maritime Museum, Bath ME

Summer 2012-February 2013

Assisted the museum's registrar with photographing and cataloging ship paintings collection. I chose this opportunity for several reasons. First, I wanted to stay active in the museum field while living with my parents and looking for jobs. Second, I wanted to try doing some museum work that was different from my other professional experience.

