

ORGANIZATION **New Bedford Whaling Museum**

LOCATION **New Bedford, Massachusetts**

THE POSITION **Chief Curator**

POSITION DESCRIPTION

The Chief Curator reports to the President. As an important member of the senior management team, he/she has primary responsibility for the Museum’s collection and exhibitions. The Chief Curator oversees a staff of 6 FTEs, plus a large cohort of volunteers and interns. The successful candidate will articulate an exhibition, interpretation, and collections philosophy and strategy that will succeed in engaging audiences in a compelling manner coupled with a strong educational focus.

The Chief Curator must demonstrate strength in one or more areas of our collection, which includes not only whaling history but also maritime history, local history, decorative art, and art history. The individual must have the strength of conviction to provide leadership and direction to staff under his/her supervision. The Chief Curator must be a creative problem solver, and have both the vision to lay out a comprehensive, innovative, approach to history-based exhibitions and work in a hands-on manner to see these tenets executed.

The Chief Curator has primary responsibility over all aspects of exhibition development including strategic planning, interpretation, budgeting and management plus design and installation of the exhibitions on location, off-site and on-line. The curator should have experience with and will be involved in securing funding, attracting financial support for the collection, and interacting with major donors.

Concurrently, the Chief Curator has primary responsibility over the management, care and growth of the art and history collections. Knowledge of collections preservation, conservation and registration is important. He/she will have knowledge of and develop strategies to, in adherence to the museum policies, strengthen the Museum’s collection by identifying gifts, acquisitions and de-accessions; and provide assistance to the President in identifying funding sources and stewarding donors.

Close coordination with the Education Department is required to ensure that exhibitions integrate engaging educational aspects and contain an appropriate level of content such that the experience of encountering history is participatory and engaging.

SPECIFIC RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE CHIEF CURATOR

Exhibitions:

- Develops and organizes a schedule for museum exhibitions.
- Oversees their design and installation in keeping with the museum’s exhibit philosophy
- Provides direction to the curatorial staff and consultants to develop exhibition content, information and related publications.
- Proven track record of integrating interactive technology within exhibition designs.
- Demonstrated experience in interpretation that inspires and provokes viewers to broaden their horizons through interactive experiences guided by a clear and compelling interpretative story.
- Works with and directs the activities of exhibition designers and installers.

- Insures that exhibitions are presented with the highest possible regard for visitor experience, content, aesthetics and care of the collections.
- Researches, writes and prepares exhibition catalogues, as necessary.
- Close interaction with the Education Department in the development of exhibitions.
- Assists with training docents for tours of exhibitions.
- Insures ongoing maintenance and care of collections on exhibition.

Collections:

- Makes recommendations to the Collections Committee for the purchase of items for the collection and negotiates for their acquisition.
- Makes recommendations to the Collections Committee for the accession and de-accession of Museum objects.
- Identifies and prioritizes conservation work.
- Oversees the care and growth of the collection with the ability to identify gaps in the collection and establish new collecting areas, and actively works with donors and dealers to improve the quality of the collection.
- Oversees the operation of the Registrar and works to improve collections-related cataloguing, documentation and reporting.
- Oversees monitoring of environmental conditions, and conducts periodic reviews of collection care issues and makes recommendations for improvements.
- Cultivates prospective donors to the collection.
- Oversees the operation and development of collections management databases.
- Responsible for the storage, care and conservation of all artifacts in the permanent collection and on loan to the Museum.
- Responsible for oversight of digital/on-line Collections access.

Administration and Financial:

- Formulates well-defined goals and objectives for the Curatorial department.
- Prepares an annual budget for the Curatorial department.
- Assists the President and the Senior Director of Development with locating funding sources to fund exhibitions, and collection purchases, and assist with the preparation of grants.
- Prepares exhibitions and curatorial related final reports for grants.
- Works collaboratively with the Senior Director of Finance in overseeing the accounting and use of capital improvement, acquisition and curatorial restricted funds.
- Identifies and remedies building and facilities needs that impact the proper care and exhibition of collections.

THE CANDIDATE

- A master's degree or equivalent years of directly related experience
- Strong knowledge in a field of study in the Arts and Humanities such as maritime painting, decorative arts and maritime history, ethnographic collections or whaling history.
- Persuasive communication skills, both oral and written.
- Familiarity with the history and material culture of the Old Dartmouth region of southeastern Massachusetts is desirable.
- An established track record of directly related senior-level professional experience, preferably in curatorial and operations management roles in a museum environment.

- Ten years of experience preferred in demonstrating success in development, implementation, and management of complex exhibitions and programs at the senior level.
- Knowledge of operational standards (AAM) and best practices for art and history museums is essential.
- Demonstrated background developing exhibits and collateral printed material.
- Proven success in grant writing and ability to communicate effectively in writing and public speaking, as well as interaction with key partners, donors, or potential donors, and professionally affiliated contacts.
- Ability to work independently and as a part of a team.
- This individual must be a self-starter and reflect excellent interpersonal and relationship development skills.
- Limited travel will be required and evening and weekend attendance at events is expected.

COMPENSATION: The compensation package consists of an attractive and competitive salary, as well as a comprehensive employee benefit plan.

How to Apply: Please send resume and cover letter to Michelle Taylor, Senior Director of Finance and Human Resources: mtaylor@whalingmuseum.org