

## *We invite you...*

...to become part of the docent team at the Oberlin Heritage Center, Oberlin's nationally-recognized history museum, historical society, and historic preservation organization. As a docent, you will help us share Oberlin's unique and powerful history with visitors from around the world.

Docents guide tour visitors—either walk-in guests or prescheduled group tours—through three buildings: the Monroe House (1866), the Little Red Schoolhouse (1836), and the Jewett House (1884). All three of these buildings feature period interiors, and two of the buildings were homes of important figures in Oberlin and American history.

There is also a periodic need for room docents. Instead of moving from room to room with the tour, a room docent stays with his or her room and answers visitors' questions as needed.

As a docent, you will interpret these buildings, and the stories of the Oberlin men and women who made history, for interested visitors. You aren't expected to be a walking encyclopedia of Oberlin history—your primary goal is to encourage an interest in history and pique people's curiosity to learn more!

## *What is my commitment?*

We need docents for walk-in (no reservations needed) tours on Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday at 10:30 a.m. and 1:30 p.m. We also maintain a busy calendar of scheduled group tours, including many school groups. Docents are needed for all of these tours, and to serve as room docents during occasional special events. Some docents commit to a regular weekly time, covering one walk-in slot every week. Others prefer to sign up for scheduled group tours. (And some do both!) We do ask that you commit to giving at least one tour per month.

## *Am I qualified?*

You don't need to be a historian to be a successful docent! The most important characteristics are an interest in Oberlin history, a belief in history's relevance to life today, and a desire to help welcome visitors to our community.

We encourage people of all ages, genders, ethnic backgrounds, and professions to get involved with our docent program! We want you to share your special perspective!

Please do note that the standard tour involves considerable standing, walking, and stair-climbing, so a fair degree of mobility is needed.

## *What's in it for me?*

We gain a lot from your participation in our docent program, but the benefits aren't one-sided! You'll gain a new appreciation for Oberlin's history and its contributions to American history. You'll learn about historic "material culture"—old houses, furniture, toys, and more. You'll meet interesting people, including fellow docents and tour visitors. You'll develop public speaking skills. And, best of all, you'll have the satisfaction of knowing that you are contributing to the improvement of Oberlin and the enrichment of the lives of our tour visitors. What more could you ask?

## *I'm not good at memorizing dates...*

Though the general outline of the tour is determined by the layout of the houses and the placement of photos, maps, and other "cues," we do NOT have a script that we hand to docents and ask them to memorize. We provide information about the houses and their residents, but to a large degree it's up to each individual docent exactly what to say in the tour. We encourage all docents to develop their tours with an emphasis on what interests them, and what they think will interest our tour visitors.

## *How do I become a docent?*

All prospective docents are asked first to go on at least one tour. Seeing a tour “in action” gives you a basic introduction to the Oberlin Heritage Center, Oberlin history, and the “end product” of the docent training process. It helps you begin thinking about how to share information with a group and allows you to hear one docent’s special take on the information we present.

All docents also attend a day-long training session, designed to present all the material you’ll need to start leading tours. This training session covers the content you’ll be presenting, and gives some tips on how to successfully communicate that information.

To help you prepare to give tours, you will be given a Docent Training Manual, which contains information on the houses and their residents, the Oberlin Heritage Center, and the nuts-and-bolts of how to give a tour. This manual is yours to keep, so you can study it, write in it, take it on vacation with you—what you will.

As you continue developing your skills as a docent, reading materials and special sessions for continued learning are made available. We also offer occasional field trips for docent “professional training.”

## *Where do I sign up?*

Give us a call at (440)774-1700 or send an email to [patm@oberlinheritage.org](mailto:patm@oberlinheritage.org). We’ll be pleased to answer any questions you may have, and to set you up to begin your docent training.

If, after looking over this information, you’ve decided that being a docent isn’t really your cup of tea but you still want to get involved with us, by all means, contact us! We always have behind-the-scenes projects going, with plenty of opportunities for volunteering. Whatever your special skills, odds are excellent that we can find a way to use them. Do join us!

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# Become a Volunteer Docent

