

Dr. Rick L. Woten appointed first full-time director of the Wapello County Historical Society Museum

Ottumwa, IA – December 26, 2018 – The Wapello County Historical Society today announced that Dr. Rick L. Woten has been appointed as the first full-time director of the museum. Dr. Woten, an Ottumwa native, returns to his hometown and the director's position from Simpson College where he previously held the position of non-tenure track assistant professor of history. Dr. Woten will begin work at the Museum January 3, 2019.

Board President Becky Frueh announced, "The board members and I are very excited to have Rick take over as the Museum Director. We feel the museum has so much to offer that is currently untapped. Having Rick in the full time position will give him the opportunity to focus on all the museum has to offer to the community."

The Wapello County Historical Society announced earlier this year, in conjunction with Area 15 Regional Planning Commission and through a grant from the Ottumwa Regional Legacy Foundation, that they are in the working stages of developing a new strategic plan to successfully guide the historical museum into the future. The early outcome of that work identified the vital necessity for the recruitment and retention of a full-time professional to help fulfill the society's mission and the board's vision and strategic plan.

"We feel it is vital to have a director on staff, to promote the face of the society, and to help the museum thrive. Inviting someone with Rick's expertise and education to come on board is exciting and we look forward to working with him to accomplish the goals in our strategic plan," said museum board member Jake McCoy.

"I am beyond delighted with the opportunity to return to my hometown and join the society as its first full-time museum director," Woten said. "I look forward to delving in with all the great members and staff, new and old, building on the hard work of those that have come before me, connecting and reconnecting with so many great people, and working with the community to preserve and convey our rich community history and make the museum a showcase of our community."

Dr. Woten brings a wealth of experience to the position where he has served as an appointed history subject matter expert and consultant on a number of committees and panels focusing on museums, tourism, and historical and cultural resources, including Silos and Smokestack National Heritage Area, the State of Iowa's Historic Preservation Office and National Registry of Historic Places, and numerous cultural resources grant programs.

Additionally, Dr. Woten has extensive experience teaching, researching, publishing, and editing in projects related to American, Iowa, and public history, including serving as coordinator and historian on the digital history project, "On-Line Primer in Rural and Agricultural History" (<http://rickwoten.com/AqHistoryPrimerPortal.html>), the Des Moines River Improvement Project, and most recently presented his work on Ottumwan Orlando Stevens as part of the Smithsonian Hometown Teams/Heroes exhibit this past spring.

Dr. Woten received his PhD from Iowa State University in 2009, completing a dissertation entitled, “Navigating Internal Improvement: Rivers, Canals, and State Formation in the Nineteenth-Century Midwest.” He also received his Master’s degree from Iowa State University in 2005, completing a Master’s thesis entitled, “Navigating the era of Improvements: The Des Moines River Improvement Lands Grant,” following undergraduate work in forestry and history.

About the Wapello County Historical Society

The Wapello County Historical Society officially organized on October 14, 1959 with a mission to collect, preserve, and convey the rich history of Wapello County, Iowa for the community and visitors. We found our current home in 1988 and opened our museum doors in the 1951 Burlington Route depot, a site listed on the National Registry of Historic Places. Sitting at the crossroads of Midwestern industry, commerce, community, and culture, the site remains an active railroad depot since the first train arrived in 1888.

The museum’s collection and exhibits trace the history and cultures of Wapello County, Iowa from the region’s natural history and pre-Columbian Amerindian life, through early European and American settlers, the emergence of a 19th-century agricultural and industrial hub and Victorian America, to 20th-century Midwestern life.

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For more information, to visit, or volunteer, please contact or visit:

Wapello County Historical Society and Museum
210 W. Main Street
Ottumwa, Iowa 52501
641-682-8676
<http://wapellocountymuseum.com/>

Operational hours: Wednesday – Saturday: Noon – 4:00pm
Admission: \$5 for adults, \$3 for children 12 and under
Telephone: (641)-682-8676