

Meet the Stan Hywet Staff

Tom McKenzie

Tour Services Manager

Staff member since 2005



What is your job at Stan Hywet? As Tour Services Manager, my job varies from day to day. I could be leading an interpretive training for 20 volunteers one day, working in the archives and cleaning historic artifacts the next, and by the weekend, I might be serving beverages at one of our public programs.

What do you enjoy most about working at Stan? I'm a people person and we have an awesome team of staff and volunteers, so that's #1. I love sharing the history and developing new tours of Stan Hywet, a gold mine of interesting stories. Third is the Manor House and grounds. It sounds cheesy, but it really is like stepping back in time.

Tell us about one unusual or interesting day at work? In 2011, the movie, *Alex Cross*, was filmed at Stan Hywet with Tyler Perry, Jean Reno and Edward Burns onsite to film some scenes. It was pretty cool to see what goes on behind the scenes during a movie shoot. I was on *Team Red*, aka the museum staff who moved historic objects for scene set-ups. We moved the Great Hall couches 15 times before we stopped counting! It was 32 hours over two days, but worth the once-in-a-lifetime experience. Another memorable film shoot was working on *Survivor's Remorse*, with LeBron James onsite to film a few scenes in the Library. To see the GOAT up close was an awesome experience!

What would you tell someone who's never been to Stan to entice them to visit? Stan Hywet is so much more than a stuffy house museum. Tours bring the Seiberling family and domestic staff to life, and with interactive activities and public programs, there's something for everyone. And this: Stan Hywet is unique because about 95% of our collection is original to the Seiberling family and in most cases, on display in its original location. Visiting the estate really is like stepping back in time.

Where are your favorite places on the estate? It's a three-way tie between the West Terrace because that's where I got married and it has an amazing view looking west! The Hidden Aspect because it's tucked away in a corner of the property that is private and often overlooked. And the Manor House rooftop because of yet another amazing view of the entire estate and views of the valley off in the distance.

In the Manor House, my favorite space is The Library. I love this space for the craftsmanship of the room and architectural details, including finely carved details in the black walnut paneling, leaded glass windows, removable light brackets and the oversized couches. Perfect in every way.

If you could go back in time and meet with one of the Seiberling family members, staff, or architect or landscape designers, who would it be and what would you talk with them about? I would like to meet landscape architect Warren Manning, to talk with him about the entire process of designing the grounds and gardens. I'd ask him what his initial thoughts were about the project when he first walked the grounds in 1911? What was his thought process for choosing specific sites for each garden? Did he have a favorite garden? And once completed, would he change anything? I'm interested because growing up, I always wanted to be a horticulturalist and spent many summers doing landscaping work for my parents and grandmother.

What do you like to do away from the estate? Interests & hobbies? In my spare time, you'll find me at the gym getting tortured by my coaches or out on the trails hiking. I've also gotten back into running over the past two years so you'll definitely see me out on the towpath this summer training for the Akron Half Marathon. I'm also a huge movie buff – sci-fi and comics, but I'm always up for a good documentary or thriller. Last and definitely not least, I enjoy spending time with my wife and our special needs cats.