

Spanish language tours offered at Old Sturbridge Village

Museum provides greater access to fast-growing population segment

STURBRIDGE – In a move to provide greater museum access and enjoyment for one of the country's fastest-growing demographic groups, Old Sturbridge Village [OSV] now offers daily tours of the Village in Spanish.

The 45-minute Spanish language tours are free with museum admission, and are led by a Spanish-speaking OSV historian in costume. The tours are particularly helpful for Spanish-speaking tourists, immigrants, for relatives and visitors of area residents and for students studying Spanish in school. The tours run daily through August 8, and then are offered weekly year round.

By some estimates, more than 16 percent of the U.S. population is Latino. In southern New England, the number of Latinos has nearly doubled since the year 2000. Large established communities of citizens from Puerto Rico and new and growing communities of immigrants from Central and South America and the Caribbean have contributed to more than half of the region's growth in the last two decades.

But the move to develop the Spanish-language tour goes beyond just offering a guided tour in another language – it also fits the museum's mission of making the Old Sturbridge Village experience more accessible to a wider range of people, and to accurately portray life in early New England, which was touched in many ways by Spanish-American influences.

According to OSV historians, New England in the early 19th century was part of a growing global economy, and trade throughout the Americas brought products and fashions from the Caribbean, Central and South America to its rural towns. Palm-leaf hats,

chocolate (to drink), coffee and other imports from Latin America were common in Yankee homes.

Today, most young Latinos speak English and the overwhelming majority of adult immigrants are committed to learning

English and understanding the history and culture of the United States. By offering tours in Spanish, OSV historians and educators hope to add a new dimension to the Old Sturbridge Village experience – something Latino children, parents and grandparents will enjoy together.

"At OSV, the entire family can watch the herrero (blacksmith) at work, see a farmwife make morcilla (black pudding), and ride the diligencia

(stagecoach)," said Deb Friedman, the museum's director of public program. "And they can all share the same memories of an entertaining and enriching experience."

One of the country's oldest and largest living history museums, OSV portrays early New England life from 1790-1840. The Village has a large staff of historians in costume, 59 historic buildings on 200 acres, three water-powered mills and two covered bridges. Visitors can ride in a stagecoach, view antiques, heirloom gardens, meet the farm animals and take part in hands-on crafts.

Old Sturbridge Village is open year-round and hours vary seasonally. Summer hours are daily 9:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. seven days a week through late October. The museum offers free parking and each admission includes a free return visit within 10 days. Tickets are \$20; seniors \$18; children 3-17, \$7; children under 3, free. For information: 800-SEE-1830; www.osv.org.



Turley Publications Submitted Photo

Children listen to a historian in costume give a history lesson.

