

MARY A. VAN BALGOOY

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Mary A. van Balgooy works with historic house museums and historic sites nationwide to rethink how they interpret their history, care for their collections, and plan for the future. Her particular interest is how museums interpret women's lives through the buildings, collections, and records in their care. A former executive director of the Society of Woman Geographers and Peerless Rockville Historic Preservation, she brings firsthand experience managing historic properties, working with boards, and directing museum staff and volunteers.

CONSULTING EXPERIENCE

Engaging Places, LLC · Rockville, Maryland
Vice President and Consultant | 2011–present

- Interpretive planning. Work with staff and volunteers to assess tours, exhibitions, and programs and explore how the site's stories can connect visitors with its history and show why the place matters.
- Collections stewardship. Develop collections management policies and practical guidelines that staff and volunteers can use to care for their collections.
- Strategic planning and governance. Help boards and staff set priorities, clarify responsibilities, and determine what they can accomplish with the people and funds available. Develop strategic plans and board manuals to guide their work.

Sewall-Belmont House and Museum · Washington, D.C.
Museum Site Consultant | 2002–2011

Advised the site now known as the Belmont-Paul Women's Equality National Monument on historic preservation, collections management, education, and interpretation.

- Led development of a ten-year architectural master plan.
- Secured an Institute of Museum and Library Services grant to catalog the collection and developed cataloging guidelines for museum staff.
- Secured a National Endowment for the Humanities grant to assess existing and potential collections storage areas and identify improvements.
- Prepared a $1 million appropriations request for funding through the Institute of Museum and Library Services.

EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP

Society of Woman Geographers · Washington, D.C.
Executive Director | 2014–2022

Served as the first professional executive director of an international membership organization with chapters across the United States and Europe.

Society of Woman Geographers (continued)

- Managed a $6 million endowment and a $400,000 annual operating and fellowship budget. Centralized accounts, established fund policies, and commissioned an independent financial review.
- Worked with the board and committees to establish mission and vision statements, revise bylaws, and develop a board manual. Guided the board in setting strategic priorities and translating them into annual work plans.
- Managed graduate fellowships and national awards, expanded in-person and online member programs, and partnered with the Library of Congress on national conferences.

Peerless Rockville Historic Preservation · Rockville, Maryland
Executive Director | 2008–2013

Succeeded the founding director and guided the organization through the leadership transition while managing a $200,000 annual budget and three historic properties owned by Peerless Rockville.

- Oversaw the restoration and subsequent rental of the Frieda Fromm-Reichmann Cottage, designated a National Historic Landmark in 2021. Also managed the rental of a historic public schoolhouse and the care of an inactive cemetery.
- Worked with the board to set priorities, strengthen financial oversight, and improve reporting on finances, fundraising, and programs. Secured grants and cultivated donors to support preservation work.
- Built partnerships with local and state organizations and wrote *Women Who Dared*, a guide connecting women's history to places in Rockville.

MUSEUM AND PRESERVATION EXPERIENCE

Supreme Court of the United States · Washington, D.C.
Collections Manager | 2002–2008

- Collaborated with collections staff to develop an emergency response plan and a collections management policy. Coordinated the conservation of objects and helped move the collections to off-site storage.
- Conducted historical research and developed exhibitions on Belva Lockwood, artist Cornelia Fassett, and the Supreme Court building. Gave lectures, answered inquiries about the Court's history and collections, and supervised interns.

Riverside County Regional Park and Open-Space District · Riverside, California
Historic Preservation Officer | 2001

Directed the historic preservation unit and supervised interpretation at historic sites, including the use of buildings, artifacts, and records in public programs. Developed a ten-year strategic plan for a historic site with input from staff, elected officials, community members, and museum professionals.

Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden · Claremont, California
Manager of Community Education Programs | 1999–2001

Developed, scheduled, and promoted classes, lectures, workshops, and field trips at a botanic garden specializing in native plants. Programs served audiences ranging from toddlers to scholars and included a three-day international symposium.

Peter F. Drucker Archives · Claremont, California
Associate Archivist | 1999

Developed the archives' guidelines for acquiring and accessioning Peter F. Drucker's professional papers and publications.

Workman and Temple Family Homestead Museum · City of Industry, California
Public Programs Manager (final position) | 1991–1998

Directed the education and public affairs department of a historic house museum, supervised four paid staff members and more than 60 volunteers, and managed the department's budget.

- Oversaw public and group tours. Coordinated and taught an intensive 12-week docent course on historical interpretation, presentation techniques, and tour development.
- Collaborated on the revision of *A Journey Through Time*, a 20-day fourth-grade social studies curriculum that included teacher training and a museum field trip. Received a Certificate of Commendation Award from the American Association for State and Local History for the project.
- Worked with the curator on seasonal exhibitions and researched artifacts for use in interpretation. Developed living history programs, workshops, and festivals and produced museum publications.

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS AND PRESENTATIONS

- *Interpreting Women's Lives at Historic House Museums*. Book under contract with Bloomsbury Academic.
- "Unwrapping the History of Christmas: The Women Who Redefined a Holiday." In *Interpreting Christmas at Museums and Historic Sites*, 2024.
- "A Woman Built This: Place-Based Evidence of Female Crisis Management." Presentation, Organization of American Historians, 2023.
- "Interpreting Women's Lives at Historic House Museums." Chapter in *Reimagining Historic House Museums*, 2019.
- "Navigating Challenges in Historic House Museums." Panel, Mid-Atlantic Association of Museums, 2019.
- "Designer of the Dream: Cliff May and the California Ranch House." *Southern California Quarterly*, 2004. Recipient of the Doyce B. Nunis Jr. Award.

PROFESSIONAL AND VOLUNTEER SERVICE

- **American Alliance of Museums, Museum Assessment Program** · Volunteer Peer Reviewer, Collections Management, 2005–2014
- **Zonta Club of Washington, D.C.** · Vice President, 2026-2027
- **Twinbrook Citizens Association** · President, 2024–2026
- **Friends of Julie Palakovich Carr** · Treasurer, 2019–2023

EDUCATION

Claremont Graduate University · M.A., History
University of California, Irvine · B.A., History