

# HEIRLOOM CONSULTING

Samantha Dorsey

## EDUCATION

M.A., *Winterthur Program American Material Culture*, University of Delaware - 2008

B.A., *History/Public History*, James Madison University - 2006

## PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

HEIRLOOM CONSULTING, PRINCIPAL – 2023-PRESENT

On a mission to save the past and serve our future through scaleable, pragmatic support and advice to cultural heritage organization staff and boards. Heirloom Consulting provides community non-profits with curation, collections management, education, interpretation, and exhibition assistance.

## SELECT PROJECTS

Patrick Henry's Scotchtown, Preservation Virginia, Furnishings Plan - 2024

- A report detailing the big ideas that drive original, intentional, accurate, and sustainable object selection and placement in this rural historic house museum.

National Capital Radio & Television Museum, Executive Director Search - 2024

- Tasked with editing and placing the Executive Director job announcement and screen candidates for suitability.

George Washington's Mount Vernon, Exhibition Services - 2023-2024

- Maintain the object asset spreadsheet and research period-appropriate graphic assets for the exhibition design team.

The Historical Society of Carroll County, Curatorial Services - 2023-2024

- Provide a collections assessment report and recommended procedural manual for three historic house museum installations and a ~25,000 collection of decorative arts, archives, and rare books.
- Process a 20+ year backlog of solicited and unsolicited donations.
- Prospect and select new collections management software and assist with the data transfer.
- Curate, write, and install a short-term community-based exhibition.

THE NATIONAL SOCIETY OF THE COLONIAL DAMES OF AMERICA (NSCDA),  
DIRECTOR OF PROGRAMS AND AUDIENCE ENGAGEMENT - 2021-2023

Responsible for engaging audiences with the NSCDA's mission, the Great American Treasures initiative, local, and national events and programs, collections, and exhibitions. Led the Visitor and Member Engagement Department, including membership and member services, marketing and communications, education, events, programs, and retail operations for the NSCDA. Manager of Assistant Directors, their teams of full and part-time staff and volunteers, and a sizable budget of earned revenue and expenses.

SELECT PROJECTS

*What does 'Colonial' mean to you?* online program

- Creator and host of interviews and lectures inviting leading historians and preservationists to expand our understanding of a shared "Colonial" past to push the boundaries of audience identity and the context of time and geography.

Great American Treasures Museum Alliance Grant

- Established best practices to run and grow the NSCDA Great American Treasures Museum Alliance Grant: a one-million-dollar endowment, to empower impactful programs and improvements at sites coast to coast.
- Managed a cohort of volunteer museum industry reviewers and an NSCDA National Board subcommittee to select impactful projects that benefit the field.

THE NATIONAL SOCIETY OF THE COLONIAL DAMES OF AMERICA, PROGRAMS MANAGER  
- 2020-2021

Responsible for running a suite of national projects focusing on preservation, education, and patriotism in the United States of America. Lead project manager, board liaison, and volunteer supervisor. Head copywriter and chief of communication and paid promotion strategy and implementation of NSCDA's mission-in-action across two of the NSCDA's three nationally recognized brands.

SELECT PROJECTS

Great American Treasures

Relaunched a new consortium of sixty-four historic properties, museums, and memorials under the NSCDA umbrella. Primary POC between site staff and NSCDA headquarters and National Board.

- Provide unified branding, free marketing, and paid placement; managed an annual membership to the American Alliance of Museum; administered scholarships to the Attingham Summer School, and developed and ran substantive staff roundtables and professional development programs.

#### *Women in Preservation Symposium*

A three-day celebration of women and their pivotal role in preservation

- Converted the 250 in-person conference into a 1,800-person virtual event in three months.
- Served as the lead project manager coordinating the work of the Smithsonian Institution, Smithsonian Associates, The NSCDA, and our marketing agency, FireFLi.

#### GEORGE MASON'S GUNSTON HALL, CURATOR OF COLLECTIONS - 2016-2020

Responsible for the professional stewardship of an 18th-century mansion and collection of reproduction outbuildings, fine and decorative arts, manuscripts, rare books, reference library, and furnishings. Lead copywriter, designer, and strategist for Gunston Hall's content-rich social media posts. Key program content researcher and event administrator. Collections management technician, collections interns, and volunteer supervisor.

#### SELECT PROJECTS

##### Furnishings Plan

- Wrote Gunston Hall's first furnishings plan based on Susan Borchardt's pioneering Room Use Study.
- Statistically reexamined object distribution room-by-room in the mansion and outbuildings.
- Restored the presence of marginalized people on the plantation landscape through the strategic use of inaccessible Mason family-owned objects and accessible period and reproduction pieces.

##### Families in Focus IMLS Grant

- A planning grant to powerfully reinterpret the mansion, kitchen yard, and riverside garden for multi-generational visitor groups.
- Helped guide robust front-end and formative research to develop content, conduct audience research, and rapidly produce and test the efficacy of Gunston Hall's interpretation and delivery of human rights.

#### “Revolutionary Rights” Exhibition

- A major new exhibition about George Mason’s influence on American government and natural rights, as illustrated in a thorough examination of his ideas, choices, and actions. Collaboratively written in-house. Professionally produced by Quatrefoil Associates in ten months.
- Co-curator, lead researcher, writer, image, and artifact manager.

#### School House Reinterpretation & Exhibition

- A reinterpretation of the reproduction 18th-century schoolhouse and tutors’ residence.
- Led four years of volunteer-mined research. Wrote the furnishings and interpretive plan.

#### SELECT PROGRAMS

##### *Collecting Rights* a Facebook Live Series

- Creator and host. This program features rare, “off-view” objects from outside collections related to George Mason’s legacy of advocating for rights.
- Managed partner recruitment, online and email marketing, and the running of each monthly session.

#### HISTORIC PROPERTIES, CITY OF BOWIE MUSEUMS, CURATOR - 2010-2016

Responsible for interpreting and preserving four historic sites (Belair Mansion Museum, Belair Stable Museum, Old Town Bowie Welcome Center, and the Bowie Railroad Museum) and a community-led collection of fine and decorative arts, archives, photographs, and research library. PastPerfect database administrator. Supervise the Archaeologist-Facilities Site Specialist, eight part-time Museum Aides, and interns. Program supervisor.

#### SELECT PROJECTS

##### Furnishings Plan/ADA Tour

- Created a narrative of the furnishings of Belair Mansion (1745-1960) for an ADA-accessible guide of the second floor, highlighting six distinct periods of occupation.

## 1820s Quilt Reproduction Project and “Stitching Stories: Bowie’s Bedcoverings Then and Now” Exhibitions

- Managed all aspects of research, interpretation, design, implementation, and marketing of a historically accurate, community-made reproduction quilt in partnership with the Southern Comforters Quilt Guild of Bowie.
- Curated “Stitching Stories,” three coordinating exhibitions about Bowie-quilting crafts from the City collection and our community members.
- Developed child-focused interactives and corresponding Boy and Girl Scout and homeschooled public education programs.

## “Back to the ‘60s!” Exhibition and Digital Photography and Archive Project

- Managed all aspects of exhibition planning and interpretation of a community-curated exhibition of 1960s-era objects and photographs from the Belair-at-Bowie neighborhood in honor of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its founding. Including curation, conservation, mount making, exhibition design, loan coordination, and media inquiries.
- Established the Bowie Photo Archive, the first publicly accessible photographic collection that visually documents the mid-20th century Levittown settlement of modern Bowie.

## SELECT PROGRAMS

### *Collector’s Corner: A Free Collections Management Workshop Series*

- Collaborated with colleagues to develop and implement a free collections management and conservation training program for community collectors and museum professionals. Fifteen workshops served several hundred participants from six states.
- Collaborated with twenty+ museums, libraries, archives, private conservators, and researchers to share program development, member information, advertising, facility use, program resources, and speaking responsibilities.
- Coordinated and generated program plans and handouts for each workshop.

## CITY OF BOWIE MUSEUMS, HISTORIC FURNISHINGS CONSULTANT - 2009

Project to research and coordinate the fabrication and installation of c. 1760 reproduction window treatments for the Center Hall of Belair Mansion, a City of Bowie Museums property.

MOUNT VERNON LADIES' ASSOCIATION, CURATORIAL RESEARCH ASSOCIATE - 2008-2010

Appointment to research and catalog the Washington family's fine and decorative art objects using specialist knowledge and the development of cross-departmental relationships and resources. Special tour guide.

WINTERTHUR MUSEUM, EXHIBITION CO-CURATOR - 2007-2008

Co-curator of "Who's Your Daddy: Families in American Needlework," with Linda Eaton, Director of Collections and Textiles Curator, and Allison Buchbinder. Wrote label copy for Gallery Guide.

### **Select Program**

Co-coordinator of the 2008 Winterthur Museum Needlework Conference

- Researched and wrote a presentation, "Ties that Bind: Documenting Families in Needlework."
- Co-developed and ran a corresponding conference program on the connoisseurship of American genealogical needlework, c. 1650-1850.

PENNYPACKER MILLS HISTORIC HOUSE, INTERPRETIVE PLANNER - 2007

Researched and wrote a c. 1907-1916 kitchen and laundry facility interpretation and interior furnishing plan. Implemented Summer 2015.

WINTERTHUR MUSEUM, UNIVERSITY OF DELAWARE, AND THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, EXHIBITION CO-CURATOR - 2007

Co-curator of "Many Moments, One Performance: Food Ways of the Early Republic," an online exhibition. Wrote the interpretive plan unpacking the people and processes needed to produce a formal meal in the Early Republic, as told through the lens of the Bishop White House (NPS).

CLAUDE MOORE COLONIAL FARM, MARKETING INTERN - 2004

Ten-week appointment to manage the staff, stock, and operating budget of the Gift Shop and 18<sup>th</sup>-century Market Fair.

### **PROFESSIONAL SERVICE**

**Society of Winterthur Fellows, Board of Directors, Membership - 2020-Present**

**Annual Conference Committee, Small Museums Association, Hotel Coordinator - 2014-2017**

## PERSONAL INITIATIVE

METRO MUSEUMS GROUP, FOUNDER & DIRECTOR - 2011-2018

A campaign that united culture-based institutions of art, artifacts, and concepts within a metropolitan region by providing frequent networking and professional development opportunities utilizing partnerships, resource sharing, and open communication. Serving nearly 400 participants from eighty-five+ institutions and twenty museum vendors.

## SELECT SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS

"Furnishings Plans for Historic Sites" Virginia Association of Museums - 2017

"Collections Assessments for Small Museums" American Alliance of Museums Annual Conference - 2015

## SELECT WRITING

Self-guided outdoor tour experience, George Mason's Gunston Hall, co-curator - 2020

Revolutionary Rights exhibition, George Mason's Gunston Hall, co-curator - 2019

A Woman's Place exhibition, George Mason's Gunston Hall, co-curator - 2018

Collector's Corner Object Care Guides, City of Bowie Museums with Allison Titman, Hammond-Harwood House, co-author - 2012-2016

Collections Advisor Article, "Collections Assessments Made Manageable" with Alan Rowe, Indiana Historical Society and the Hoosier Heritage Alliance, author - 2014

Review of "Connecticut Needlework: Women, Art, and Family, 1740-1840," by Susan Schoelwer Winterthur Portfolio, University of Chicago Press, author - 2013

Eight article contribution, "Clothing and Fashion in American History: A Comprehensive Encyclopedia" ABC-CLIO, author - 2013 (published 2015)

Museum Focus Article, "Belair Mansion and Belair Stable Museum" Antiques and Fine Art Magazine, author - 2013