

William W. Gwaltney

AAAM Board President: 2002–2004



Bill Gwaltney, a seventh-generation native of Washington, D.C, has spent more than four decades shaping the field of public history, interpretation, and cultural preservation. A graduate of the University of Maryland, College Park, he began his career with the National Park Service (NPS) in 1978 as a seasonal interpreter at Bent's Old Fort National Historic Site.

This first assignment launched a distinguished professional journey defined by a commitment to inclusive storytelling and the preservation of America's diverse historical narratives. Gwaltney went on to serve in a wide range of interpretive, curatorial, and leadership roles across the National Park Service. His early positions included work at the Lincoln Memorial, Prince William Forest Park, and multiple seasons at Bent's Old Fort, where he later became Museum Curator and Chief Ranger. His career took him to Fort Davis National Historic Site in Texas, followed by leadership roles in the National Capital Region and the Southwest Region. He later served as superintendent at both Booker T. Washington National Monument and Fort Laramie National Historic Site. From 1998 to 2001, he guided interpretive programs at Rocky Mountain National Park as Chief of Interpretation before becoming Assistant Regional Director for the Intermountain Region, a role he held for more than a decade.

Beyond the NPS, Gwaltney contributed significantly to national and international public history initiatives. He served as Guest Curator of Military History for the Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture and later as Director of Interpretation and Visitor Services for the American Battle Monuments Commission in Paris. His curatorial work includes major exhibitions on Buffalo Soldiers, Black cowboys, and African American military history. He has also advised film productions, including the acclaimed movie *Glory*. His leadership extends to professional organizations, notably the Association of African American Museums, where he served as board member, vice president, and president. His many honors—including the Robert G. Stanton Award for Diversity and Interpretation—reflect a career dedicated to elevating underrepresented histories and strengthening the interpretive profession.