



GORE PLACE

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THE AGRARIAN

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CONTINENTAL CURRENCY \$20 BANKNOTE, UNIVERSITY OF NOTRE DAME, PUBLIC DOMAIN, VIA WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

WHO KILLED CONTINENTAL CURRENCY?

BY THOM ROACH, DIRECTOR OF INTERPRETATION

“Having more credit than money, thus one goes through the world.”

Claudine von Villa Bella (1776) — Goethe

It’s 1776. You are a shopkeeper in western Massachusetts. A customer hands you a bill of credit—issued by the Second Continental Congress in May of the previous year—in payment for some dry goods. Nowhere on the bill does it say it’s legal tender or interest-bearing. It does state that it may be redeemed at face value in three years for a Spanish milled silver dollar. How do you determine its value? Is it even real?

You calculate its worth using time discounting—the cost of accepting a bill that will not be redeemable for years. Assuming an annual interest rate of 6% and working back from the bill’s redemption date, you determine its present value to be 75% of face value.

When the bill matures, you can use it to pay your state taxes or receive a Spanish dollar. Once redeemed, the bill will be sent to the Continental Treasury and destroyed. But

nothing is guaranteed. Continental currency is backed only by the credit of a nascent government with little gold or silver reserves.

With Congress issuing new bills each year and no end in sight—more than \$200,000,000 by war’s end—and with each issue declaring a different redemption window, faith in Continental currency may soon collapse. How will Congress meet its obligations without pushing redemption windows far into the future or raising taxes well beyond the public’s ability to pay?

By 1778, Continental currency will yield about 10 percent of face value. By the end of 1781, it will be virtually worthless. Will Congress’s fiscal policies kill the Continental? Benjamin Franklin identified another culprit:

“Paper money was our universal currency. But...our enemies resolved to deprive us of its use by depreciating it; and the most effectual means they could contrive was to counterfeit it.” — Benjamin Franklin



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A LETTER FROM OUR BOARD PRESIDENT



WINTERS VARY, and for many this winter was a long and cold one! Spring brings longed for relief, glee for some, and hard work for our farmers. But we will all benefit from warmer and longer days! Preparations for our Annual Sheepshearing Festival and the birthing of lambs are in full swing, and the staff here at Gore Place have full days and—when the lambs arrive—long nights!

In this issue of the Agrarian, we highlight our Revolutionary past with treasures from our collection. We learn how the Gores were enmeshed in the changing politics and economies of their time through stories about early currency and fireworks.

Speaking of fireworks, during 2026 we can expect fireworks in abundance with the celebration of America's 250th. John Adams envisioned that Americans would celebrate the nation's birthday with bonfires and fireworks "forever more." I can attest to the continuance of Adams's vision: one recent Independence Day, I took a cross-country, overnight flight and from my window beheld firework displays from sea to shining sea.

Beautiful Spring days will soon be here, so come savor some of this season at Gore Place. Sheepshearing will be April 25th, the last Saturday of the month. Last year, despite the less-than-ideal weather, our guests reported having a delightful time. So rain or shine (we have ordered the sun!), come to Sheepshearing or for a visit soon.

If you haven't done so already, please consider a membership and a donation to Gore Place Society, and know both will go to support the beautiful mansion, programming, and the farm (including feeding the sheep and their lambs), and all the wonderful things we do here at Gore Place!

DEBBIE DOBBINS
PRESIDENT OF THE BOARD

A CORRECTION. In issue No. 19, in the piece entitled *In the Line of Fire*, the two cannons liberated by Samuel Gore and others were taken to Concord for safekeeping and used by the Continental Army throughout the war. There is no record of them being used at Dorchester Heights.

WHO KILLED CONTINENTAL CURRENCY CONTINUED

Even as you decide to accept the Continental, the British are undermining its value, putting thousands of counterfeit bills into circulation. They are printing many of these counterfeit bills on board *H.M.S. Phoenix*, anchored in New York Harbor. Since January 1776, the *Phoenix* has been printing Continental currency from the May 10, 1775, release. These phony bills are being put into circulation by collaborators, many in the Loyalist communities of British-occupied cities and towns. The British are further eroding the public's faith in Continental currency by publishing notices in newspapers alerting the public to the great number of high-quality counterfeit bills in circulation.

So, do you take the bill or not? Is it your patriotic duty to support the war effort by accepting this new currency? Is this customer's business worth the risk?

You take the bill and put it in the cash box among some silver coins and state-issued bills of credit. You'll pass it on the first chance you get.

SOURCES

Grubb, Farley, *The Continental Dollar: How the American Revolution Was Financed Using Paper Money*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 2023

Scott, Kenneth, *Counterfeiting in Colonial America*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1957

Wetherford, Jack, *The History of Money*, Crown Publishing, New York, 1997

HANDLE WITH CARE

BY THOM ROACH, DIRECTOR OF INTERPRETATION

**“Dined at the Raleigh, & went to the Fire works” —
George Washington, diary entry, 10 June 1774¹**

To celebrate the signing of the Declaration of Independence, John Adams envisioned “bonfires and illuminations [fireworks] from one end of this Continent to the other, from this Time forward forever more.” The first official celebration was held in 1777, in Philadelphia, not on July 2nd as Adams wished but on the 4th—forever more.

In Paris, in 1801, Christopher and Rebecca Gore witnessed fireworks celebrating the anniversary of a different historic event—Napoleon’s 1799 coup. The Gores rented an apartment for the day with an unobstructed view of the festivities. Christopher wrote to his friend Rufus King, “The fete was brilliant...We saw it without a crowd and perfectly at our ease...A few accidents happened, a man or two killed by the falling of some of the works into the pavilion.” Gore then described the premature explosion of the bouquet—fireworks meant for the grand finale, “We looked for something exquisite indeed at the close...but after standing on tip-toes mind and body, for a quarter of an hour...we were told it was finished, the bouquet was no more.”²

That men were killed seems unsurprising to Gore. In an era of conflict, gunpowder causing mayhem may not have surprised.

Christopher Gore’s history with gunpowder reflects that era. His older brother Sammy was wounded by birdshot at the February 1770 protest in Boston where British informer Ebenezer



MADE IN THE UNITED STATES, THIS LATE-18TH CENTURY PEAR-SHAPED POWDER HORN WAS USED TO STORE, PROTECT, AND DISPENSE GUNPOWDER INTO MUZZLE-LOADING FIREARMS DURING THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION, GORE PLACE COLLECTION.

Richardson killed young Christopher Seider.³ A month later, a stray ball struck Christopher’s future father-in-law, Edward Payne, as he watched the Boston Massacre from the doorway of his King Street home. As a Lieutenant of Fireworkers⁴ in his brother-in-law’s artillery regiment, eighteen-year-old Christopher Gore would have known about the lethal effects of gunpowder. And during his time as a commissioner in London, Gore came dangerously close to a duel with fellow American George Erving.

Sometimes celebratory, often destructive, gunpowder has helped to shape the modern world. As always, *handle with care*.

¹3. Bell, J.L., Boston 1775, <https://boston1775.blogspot.com>

²The Rufus King Papers, The New York Historical Society

⁴ The junior-most rank in an artillery unit, a Lieutenant of Fireworkers would be trained in the manufacture and use of combustible or explosive materials.

IN MEMORIAM: JANE T. N. FOGG



ERIC WORKMAN

We are saddened to share the passing of Mrs. Jane T. N. Fogg. A devoted supporter and longtime friend of Gore Place, Jane was a gracious and familiar presence at our events, including A December Evening, which she attended in 2025.

Debbie Gates, former President of the Board of Governors, admired Jane’s “loyalty to the city of Waltham and her conviction that she should support the place that had supported her and her family.”

“Jane Fogg loved Gore Place,” said Michael Aylward, Vice President of the Board of Governors. “She contributed to our collections, delighted in Sheepshearing, and was a regular at our Christmas party. Jane knew the history of Gore Place and Waltham well, but she also reveled in seeing the Museum embraced by a younger generation—much as she delighted in the grandchildren and great-grandchildren she doted on.”

Jane will be deeply missed by everyone at Gore Place and remembered with great affection.

REVOLUTIONARY COLLECTIONS

BY CONNOR MCELHINNEY, COLLECTIONS SPECIALIST

THE YEARS SURROUNDING THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION were marked by a surge of patriotism, hero-worship, and the deliberate construction of national memory. Although Americans rejected monarchy, they did not abandon reverence for leadership; instead, they redirected it toward the revolutionary figures of the new republic. Men such as George Washington and Benjamin Franklin were elevated beyond the status of ordinary statesmen and transformed into symbols of wisdom and guardians of national virtue.

Allegorical prints, commemorative ceramics, textiles, and personal accessories circulated widely, embedding nationalist ideals into domestic life. Homes became sites of political display. The following objects in the Gore Place collection demonstrate how material culture in early America played a central role in transforming revolutionary leaders into enduring civic heroes and cementing a shared symbolic language of independence.

Many of these items celebrating American independence were actually produced in England. America lacked the industrial infrastructure needed for large-scale ceramic, textile, and metal production. British manufacturers were quick to take advantage of the emerging American market. The economic incentive maintained strong trade ties between the two nations despite their political separation.



1a
Punch
Bowl



1b
Punch
Bowl

1 Produced in England between 1783 and 1789, this lead-glazed creamware punch bowl features black transfer-printed portraits of George Washington and Benjamin Franklin, an American eagle bearing the motto *E Pluribus Unum*, and an additional inscription proclaiming: By Virtue and Valour, we have freed our country, extended our commerce, and laid the foundation of a great empire. The center of a social gathering, the bowl reinforces patriotism and lays the foundation for imperial aspirations.

2 This 1785 red and white printed cotton textile, produced in England, depicts the allegorical figure of America kneeling at the Altar of Liberty and presenting medallions of her illustrious sons, including George Washington and Benjamin Franklin. The men are transformed into symbolic offerings to Liberty itself and elevated to near-sacred figures.



2
Cotton
Textile



3
Brass
Cloak Pin



4
Wax
Medallion



1c
Punch
Bowl



1d
Punch
Bowl

**3
Brass
Cloak
Pin**

Manufactured in England between 1790 and 1810, this brass cloak pin features a stamped profile of George Washington. Unlike allegorical prints or ceremonial bowls, this object brought Washington's image onto the body itself. As a wearable fastening, the pin merged utility with admiration, reflecting the rapid transformation of his likeness into an everyday ornament.

**4
Wax
Medallion**

This ivory-coloured wax medallion, produced in the United States between 1790 and 1820, presents a sculpted profile of Benjamin Franklin mounted within a circular frame. Likely intended for domestic display, the medallion reflects a shift from celebration to preservation following the deaths of leading revolutionary figures.

NEW SHEEP: DORSET HORNS

BY SCOTT CLARKE, FARMER

The farm added five new ewes to the flock in mid-February. Jack Ordway and I drove the trailer up to Three Creeks Farm in New Hampton, New Hampshire, to pick up the pure bred Dorset Horns. All five ewes will have lambs in May.

Dorset Horn is an endangered British breed of domestic sheep, documented from the 17th century. What makes them particularly special is their extended, or aseasonal, breeding. Most sheep mate in the fall and produce lambs in the spring. In contrast, Dorsets can be bred twice a year. These new additions to our flock will expand the visitor experience by creating opportunities to see lambs in the fall.



DONOR SPOTLIGHT

“Gore Place is one of the few places where history feels both carefully preserved and fully alive.”

Drew and Emily have been lifelong fans of Gore Place. They grew up attending events like Sheepshearing and family weddings. Over the years, they have formed a strong appreciation for the beautifully preserved mansion and working farm.



As friends and supporters, Drew and Emily generously share both their time and resources to ensure Gore Place continues to thrive as a historic landmark and a community gathering place. They make a point of introducing new friends to Gore Place, warmly widening the community while honoring the longstanding support that sustains it.

Drew and Emily embody something central to Gore Place’s character: it is a living landmark, rooted in history yet continually renewed by each new generation who finds their way here. “Few places combine historic preservation, open space, agriculture, and community programming in quite the same way. It is a special resource for the area, and one that feels increasingly rare.”

UPCOMING EVENTS

SHEEPSHEARING FESTIVAL

The 39th Annual Sheepshearing Festival is just around the corner. Join us on **Saturday, April 25 from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.** for this beloved spring festival. New this year: Mighty Squirrel Brewing will bring a beer garden to the north lawn.

WALLPAPER EXHIBITION

From **May 7 to July 10**, visit the Mansion to see a special exhibition: *Pattern & Place: Wallpapers of the Gore Mansion, 1806-Present*. Supported by the Felicia Fund.

PLANT SALE WEEKEND

Farmer Scott’s Plant Sale Weekend is **May 15-17**. Browse heirloom tomato seedlings, flowers, herbs, and more! Watertown PorchFest will be performing at the sale on May 16.

SPRING INTO SUMMER

Party like Christopher and Rebecca Gore! Join us for this strawberry-themed benefit to support Gore Place on **June 12 at 6 p.m.** Sway to live music, sip a strawberry themed cocktail, and raise your paddle for Gore Place.

CORN ROAST

This family-friendly event returns on **August 13**. Enjoy roasted corn, live music, hayrides, and lawn games. Free to attend, food and drinks available *a la carte*.

A December Evening

PRESENTED BY APPLETON PARTNERS, INC

PHOTOS BY ERIC WORKMAN



KATIE MCGAULEY, NANCY PLACE, CHUCK FARRINGTON, & MARTHA KING



CAROLYN ROSS, WILLIAM CODINHA, & NINA HUNNEWELL



WILLIAM & PEMBROKE KYLE



WENDY ALMQUIST & CHARLOTTE PATTEN



SUSAN ROCHE & CAROLE GUNST



JOHN QUINN & JULIE COX



SUSAN & EMILY ROBERTSON



ADRIAN & SARAH ROBBINS-COLE



JIM HUNNEWELL & JIM BORDEWICK



DOUG HARDING, MARTHA KING, & AMEY MOOT



REBECCA DEANS-ROWE, AMY ROSENBERG, MICHAEL WEISHAN, & JENNIFER & JON DELLI PRISCOLI

WELCOME TO OUR NEWEST BOARD MEMBER JIM BORDEWICK

Jim is a retired corporate lawyer (Ropes & Gray, MFS Investment Management, and Bank of America) with a strong interest in museums, historic houses, and education.

Jim stays active in the entrepreneurial world, investing in and managing various start-ups, and serves on the board of a large mutual fund group.



Jim enjoys playing golf, cooking, traveling, and historic architecture. He is married to a history professor (who specializes in architectural history), and they have two children. Jim is excited to join the Board and looks forward to contributing to Gore Place's continued growth through deepening relationships with the community, its members, and supporters in order to foster the organization's long-term potential.

WELCOME COLLECTIONS SPECIALIST CONNOR MCELHINNEY

Gore Place welcomed Connor in mid-January for a six month appointment as Collections Specialist.

Connor is from Scotland and graduated from the University of Glasgow last year, where he studied Philosophy and Digital Media & Information Studies (DMIS). Connor writes, "I've always loved history and exploring past lives, and I wanted to pursue a path that reflects this interest."

As part of his work to organize the collections spaces, Connor is relocating objects from the Mansion attic to the Carriage House basement, where they will be in a temperature controlled, accessible space.



FARM TO FORM

BY LEAH KOTOK, PROGRAMS MANAGER



ALEXANDRA ADAMO-CIOFFREDI, INTERWOVEN

Gore Place in collaboration with MassArt is putting on a contemporary art exhibition at the Watertown Free Public Library this April. Titled *Farm to Form*, the month-long display features educational panels that trace the stages of wool production alongside contemporary fiber artworks. MassArt professor Alexandra Adamo-Cioffredi and MassArt student Yasemin Isaacs have curated the exhibition in collaboration with emerging 3D artists. In fall 2025, Adamo-Cioffredi's fiber art students met with Farmer Scott to learn about sheep and wool. They will return to Gore Place for the Sheepshearing Festival to demonstrate wool working and display their library of fiber zines.

STRATEGIC PLAN

Gore Place finalized a new strategic plan in early 2026. Revised vision and mission statements will keep our focus on four core values: beauty, stewardship, scholarship, and access.

A vibrant center of history and culture, Gore Place brings people together in creative ways while adhering to the highest standards of stewardship of the property. We continue Christopher and Rebecca Gore's spirit of innovation and appreciation of natural beauty and culture.

Using our values, vision, and mission as guides, the strategic plan identifies five priorities and goals for the next 5-10 years:

- Engage our audiences in meaningful ways
- Build financial and ecological resilience
- Create beauty, art, and community
- Steward our land, buildings, and collections
- Grow public awareness

As part of this process, Gore Place has also begun to think about the easternmost 10 acres of the property, which are currently underutilized, and how this land can support many of these priorities.

A copy of the Strategic Plan is available on our website: goreplace.org/about.