



GORE PLACE

IN THIS ISSUE

- A Sense of Place
- Letter from the President
- Upcoming Events
- Collection Highlight
- Research Update
- Supporter Spotlight
- A December Evening
- Meet Our New Staff

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THE AGRARIAN

THE NEWSLETTER OF GORE PLACE | SPRING 2025 | ISSUE NUMBER 18



A Sense of Place

By Thom Roach, Director of Interpretation

“I could have retired to my farm at Waltham with what would to me have been an independence, though very far from what the aristocracy deem a competence.”

— Letter from Christopher Gore to Rufus King, 1803

In the late 1700s and early 1800s, Christopher and Rebecca Gore created an oasis in the countryside. They built a mansion, a carriage house, a greenhouse, and a fruit wall. They planted gardens, hedges, and trees and surrounded it all with hundreds of acres of farm fields and pasture land. Today, a small portion of the nearly 400-acre estate remains. But the landscape surrounding it would be unrecognizable to the Gores. Where corn grew and cattle grazed, stores, houses, and apartment complexes now stand.

If you live on Whitman, Longfellow, or Emerson Road, on Highland Avenue in Watertown, or Fairfax Road in Waltham, you are living on the former estate of Christopher and Rebecca Gore. If you visit friends in Warrendale, shop at the Walgreens, or gas-up at the Shell on Main, you are walking Gore’s former fields which he called the Forty Acre Lot.

Where BJ’s and Watertown Ford now stand, oats, barley, and rye once grew on Gore’s 80-acre Ward

Farm. From the banks of the Charles north to Grove Street, this land afforded spectacular views of Christopher and Rebecca’s mansion on a hill. Shop at Shaw’s or grab a coffee at Dunkin’ Donuts, and you are walking Gore’s land.

Grab your compass and head to the corner of Seyon and Grove Street, face east and follow the stone wall into Watertown where the street name changes to Waltham Street. Just north of the stonewall sits the Farmer’s Cottage. Built in the early 1840s, in the French Provincial style, the Farmer’s Cottage originally stood across the road in what is now a protected wetland. Keep walking past the small brook on your left, where alewife once ran, to Edward Road. Here was the western border of the 18-acre plot Gore purchased from the Widow Harrington in 1791. It ran east to include what is now Rutland, Evans, and Pine Street and north to Main Street.

A Sense of Place

is continued on page 4



GORE PLACE

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Letter from Our Board President



Dear Friends of Gore Place,

Place plays a major role in life and in art. And time can dramatically transform the places we know and love. There was a time when, if you stood on the south side of the Mansion at Gore Place, you would see acres of waving wheat and flocks of grazing sheep down to the Charles.

Today at Gore Place, we have many wonderful neighbors—homes and businesses large and small. As you read in the main article of this Spring 2025 issue about the surrounding land, imagine a time when Waltham and Watertown were rural landscapes; when we traveled on foot, on horseback, or by carriage; when the trip from Boston was not a matter of minutes but of hours.

The Gores' primary home was in Boston. Gore Place was their escape from the city until they began living here year round in 1816. Then, this was an estate of nearly 400 acres. Today, the Gore Place Society stewards a small portion of that original property. We believe Christopher and Rebecca Gore would be proud to see that Gore Place has become such a wonderful and enriching community resource for neighbors and visitors from near and far.

Season also plays an important role in art and in life. We are entering a beautiful season at Gore Place: spring. The birthing of lambs, the rebirth of the fields, the blooming of the trees and gardens are just part of the season's beauty. After a long, cold winter, the joy of spring offers an intensity of feeling we may not always experience in other seasons. This spring, Gore Place will again host the ever-popular Sheepshearing Festival (Saturday, April 26) with demonstrations of sheep herding and shearing, music, fiber art displays, gorgeous yarns, foods, and many crafters. We hope you will come and bring new friends to Gore Place. A Gore Place family membership entitles you to free admission for two adults. And children 12 and under are admitted free. Further into the spring season, we will again host Spring Into Summer, an elegant summer evening fundraiser under the tent, with fine food, beverages, and music. You can see more about these events at goreplace.org.

If you haven't done so already, please consider a membership and a donation, and know both will go to support the beautiful Mansion, property and 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



DON'T MISS THESE UPCOMING EVENTS

SHEEPSHEARING FESTIVAL
SATURDAY, APRIL 26, RAIN OR SHINE

FARMER SCOTT'S HEIRLOOM TOMATO PLANT SALE WEEKEND
FRIDAY, MAY 16 THROUGH SUNDAY, MAY 18, 2025

SIGN UP FOR OUR E-MAIL NEWSLETTER AND STAY IN THE KNOW ABOUT UPCOMING CONCERTS, LECTURES, SPECIAL EVENTS, AND MORE:
goreplace.org/landing/join-our-email-list

Collection Highlight: Seymour Side Table

In the dining room of Gore Place there is an unusual side table. It has a plain top but beautifully inlaid sides and ornately carved legs. Records suggest that this table was made by one of Boston's most famous furniture makers: Thomas Seymour. Our Collections Committee member, Clark Pearce, has done research on this very rare group of Seymour tables. There are only five that are known to exist, and he has had the opportunity to examine each table in detail. These are a spectacular group of top-of-the-line works from the Seymour shop, and though the Gore table is in need of restoration, the museum is incredibly lucky to have an example in our collection.

All five of these tables are closely based on plate 63 in Thomas Sheraton's *The Cabinet Dictionary* of 1803, which Seymour almost certainly owned. The MFA owns Seymour's inscribed copy of Sheraton's 1794 *The Cabinet-maker's and Upholsterer's Drawing Book*. They also own a magnificent pair of tables from this group, which were commissioned by Elizabeth Derby West for her Oak Hill house around 1806-1809. The tables are all slightly different from each other, but a table in a local private collection is quite similar to the Gore table. Its magnificent inlaid top is original and intact and could serve as a model for a new top that could be made by a highly skilled craftsman.

IMAGE CREDITS (FROM TOP TO BOTTOM):

Image one and two: Seymour Table in a private collection.

Image three: Seymour Table in the Gore Place collection.



Letter from the Executive Director

Spring is in the air and Gore Place has been preparing for a new season. The cold weather this winter led us to take on some indoor improvements in the Mansion. In December, we closed the museum for a week and had the entire staff help with a cleaning of the first floor. We re-blackened hearths and fireplace surrounds; we moved paintings; we took the curtains down, washed and ironed them, and then cleaned the windows from top to bottom. Days of cleaning made the Mansion sparkle. The cold days of January and February let us continue improvements. Floors have been painted, windows have been rehung, offices have been taken apart and put back together.

We have also been getting the Farm ready for the spring. Seeds are planted in our greenhouses and the first lambs are starting to arrive. The estate is alive, and we all look forward to welcoming our members and guests.

While national and international news can feel overwhelming, Gore Place remains a respite. We are a community resource where people can take a break, walk our grounds, visit the lambs, and recharge. We keep the Mansion, the Farm, and the estate an oasis. We hope you will support our work by being a member, making a donation, attending an event, or bringing your friends and family to enjoy Gore Place.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Gavin".

Gavin Kleespies
Executive Director



BUILDING A REPUTATION AND A FARM

Educated at Harvard, by his early 20s Christopher Gore had a thriving law practice with offices on State Street in Boston. He held stock in mills, bridges, and canals and speculated in currency. He married Rebecca Amory Payne, daughter of a successful insurance broker, while they were both in their mid-twenties.

Christopher Gore was politically astute, serving as legislator, governor, and U.S. Senator. And the Gores were worldly, living in London and Paris while he was part of the diplomatic corps of the early Republic. He even served as the acting ambassador to England for a short while. Nothing in his CV suggested he was a man of the land. But in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, agriculture still dominated the economy. Being “a man of property” was expected of a gentleman. And Christopher Gore aspired to the elite.

But Gore’s status as a “gentleman farmer” was not just for show. He was a founding member of the Massachusetts Society for Promoting Agriculture, which offered “handsome premiums to the men of enterprise who have by their inquiries made useful discoveries and communicated them to the public.”

Gore’s farm was exceptional due to his interest in agricultural reform and experimentation, interests he shared with Thomas Jefferson. Though they occupied opposing political positions—Gore was a Federalist and Jefferson a Democratic-Republican—both men shared an approach to farming that sought to

improve the economy of their region by applying scientific methods to cultivation and animal husbandry. These men of wealth and influence believed that “to study the convenience and supply the wants of society [was] compatible with the highest rank and most exalted mind.”¹

Rebecca Gore shared her husband’s enthusiasm for horticulture. Their elaborate greenhouse and 200-foot-long fruit wall allowed her exotic plants, grapevines, and fruit trees to survive the harsh New England winters. Even after Christopher’s death in 1827, Rebecca continued to work with a series of gardeners, developing prize-winning fruit trees and ornamental plants. She was one of the first two women inducted into the Massachusetts Horticultural Society in recognition of her contributions to the field.

WHY WALTHAM AND WATERTOWN?

Just two hours by carriage from Boston, Gore’s land in Watertown and Waltham was well situated. Watertown was an old and established community. Waltham offered acres of cleared farmland. Straddling the Waltham-Watertown line, and set between the Main Road and the Charles River, Gore’s farm enjoyed easy access to the markets of Boston, where he could sell his surplus produce, and the stockyards of Brighton, where livestock could be bought and sold. And there were others of his social circle, like the Lymans, the Codmans, and the Otises, for company.

BEFORE THE GORES

In 1644, George Phillips was granted 40

acres of plow land in the area where the Gores would later build their home. It was described as the Hither Plain and was bounded by the highway (Main Street), the way between the lots (Grove Street), the drift way (Gore Street), and the brook. Christopher Gore bought this land in 1786. Over the next five years, he purchased additional acres in various lots: a 12-acre lot west of his house, a 40-acre lot north of Main Street, the 80-acre Ward Farm southwest of Gore’s original purchase, extending to the river, 26 acres of pastureland on Pigeon Hill, an 8-acre lot in a location in Waltham we have yet to identify, the 14.5-acre Hammond Pasture, the 27-acre Adams’ Place and an adjacent 6.5 acre lot, 25 acres of the Tainter lot, a 23-acre woodlot somewhere in Waltham, 2 acres of Chester meadow, and 5 acres of Tainter meadow at Beaver Brook north of Main Street.

After 1791, Gore made only three more purchases of surrounding land: 18.5 acres in Watertown, 6 acres in Waltham, and the 85-acre Benjamin Farm which ran west from Willow Street to Newton Street. Gore’s land purchases provided the resources needed to develop a practical and elegant estate with the goal of agricultural self-sufficiency.

Christopher Gore died in 1827 and the property went to his wife Rebecca. The Gores had no children. Rebecca Gore’s death in 1834 ended the Gore era on the estate.

For almost a century, the land surrounding Gore Place changed little. By the 1920s, the boundary line of Waltham and Watertown still cut through open farm fields and pastures. At that time, Gore’s land was owned by the Waltham Country Club. What had been Christopher and Rebecca’s pleasure grounds had become tennis courts and fairways. But by the end of the Second World War, a housing boom had begun resulting in the urban landscape we see today.

WHAT GREW WHERE?

So, what was Gore growing on all these acres? Fortunately, we have the journal of his farm manager, Jacob Farwell, to tell us. Farwell’s journal covers the years 1820 to 1826. In it, he gives a day-to-day account of happenings on the farm. Along

with a good deal of hay and grass, which served as food for the animals, and groves of fruit trees, Farwell records growing: beans, beets, cabbage, carrots, celery, corn, cucumbers, horseradish, mangel wurzel, melons, peas, potatoes, pumpkins, radishes, rutabaga, squash, and turnips.

In 1822, Farwell listed the crops by lots. The Forty Acre Lot north of Main Street contained groves of trees and fields of wheat and hay. To the east of the brook, the Harrington Lot was planted with hay, rye, potatoes, cabbages, cucumber, and sweet corn, with a grove of apple trees along Main Street. And the 80-acre Ward Farm Lot grew oats, barley, rye, pumpkins, and cucumbers, with pasture land for grazing along the banks of the Charles. Even the land around the mansion was used to grow potatoes, sweet corn, and peas and featured a kitchen garden, grapevines, and a grove of fruit trees.

THE GREAT TRANSFORMATION

Even as Gore was pouring resources into farming, he was playing a role in the great transformation that was about to occur. In the early 19th century, New England's

economy moved away from agriculture and toward industry, a move Christopher Gore helped bring about with his investments in textile mills and the canal works that so efficiently moved the miles of cloth they produced to market. The mills required more workers and more housing. The farms moved west as factories took their place.

GORE PLACE IN 2025

Visit the nearly 50-acre estate at Gore Place today and you will experience a landscape Christopher and Rebecca Gore would recognize. Gone are their fruit wall, greenhouses, and barns. But their 1793 Carriage House and 1806 Mansion remain. Many trees would be familiar to the Gores (the horse chestnut at the Gore Street Entrance was likely planted by the Gores). Also familiar would be the Leicester Longwool sheep grazing in the pasture, a breed Gore had admired during his 1799 trip to Robert Bakewell's Farm in Leicestershire, England. It is the surrounding acres that have changed so radically in the past 200 years.

A PLACE FOR THE FUTURE

It is the goal of Gore Place to preserve these few remaining acres for future generations,

to keep alive a vision of the land Christopher and Rebecca Gore shared. What will become of the surrounding acres of Gore's "farm at Waltham" in the coming years? How will the future stewards of the land transform it to meet their needs and the needs of their community? Time will tell.

If you would like to explore the history of the land surrounding the Gore estate, there are maps, photos, and other resources at the Waltham Historical Society facilities at the former Bright School. You can make an appointment to view documents and maps by contacting them at inquiries@walthamhistoricalsociety.org. They can also direct you to the extensive independent research of Morton Isaacson of the Historical Commission, which informed this article.

1. Ripley, Samuel, "A Topographical & Historical Description of Waltham, in the County of Middlesex" January 1, 1815, Massachusetts Historical Society Collections, ser. 2, vol. 3, p. 272.

Information on the history of the land ownership and Gore's land purchases from Landscape and Farming at Gore Place by Electa Kane-Tritsch. Other sources include the archives at the Waltham Historical Society and A Detailed History of Land Development in the Warrendale Section of Waltham by Morton S. Isaacson.

ROBERT ROBERTS RESEARCH UPDATE

The story of author, activist, and head servant Robert Roberts is a fascinating part of our interpretation at Gore Place. An annotated, searchable version of his book, *The House Servant's Directory*, with a biographical introduction by historian Diann Ralph, will soon be available online, offering a remarkable window into domestic life in the early Republic and providing valuable information to historians and researchers.

Robert Roberts.

Detail from Last Will and Testament of Christopher Gore, 1826

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The Making of a Prime Minister

In the early 19th-century, just as wealthy young Americans were making the Grand Tour of Europe, their European counterparts were traveling to America to see what all the fuss was about. These trips often lasted a year or two. Some Europeans found literary and financial success in publishing their impressions of the young Republic—Alexis de Tocqueville, famously, in *Democracy In America* in 1835.

A decade before Tocqueville, the twenty-five-year-old future 14th Earl of Derby and Prime Minister of England, Edward Geoffrey Stanley, traveled throughout the eastern half of North America. Going by stagecoach, steamboat, and canoe, on horseback and on foot, Stanley experienced an America that would inform his future careers as a reformer and a leader of his country's government. This coming April 12, historian Caroline Stanley, Countess of Derby, and author Andrew O'Shaughnessy will tell of Stanley's American adventure in an illustrated talk at Gore Place.

Caroline Stanley studied History and History of Art at London University and worked for nearly a decade in all the royal palaces as Exhibitions Assistant to the Surveyor of the Queen's Paintings of the Royal Collection. She is married to the 19th Earl of Derby. Professor Andrew O'Shaughnessy is Professor of History at the University of Virginia and noted scholar on the American Revolution. He is currently Visiting Fellow at Magdalen College, Oxford.



"Slavery is a stain upon humanity - we might even in time perhaps have a Black President"
- Edward Geoffrey Stanley

Caroline Stanley, Countess of Derby, at Gore Place!

THE MAKING OF A PRIME MINISTER SATURDAY, APRIL 12, 2025 AT 2:00 P.M.

A TALK BY THE COUNTESS OF DERBY, CAROLINE STANLEY, AND
UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA PROFESSOR ANDREW O'SHAUGHNESSY

Learn more at goreplace.org/whats-on



Supporter Spotlight: Doug Harding



Doug Harding's connection to Gore Place predates his appointment to the Board of Governors—it is a return to his roots as a child growing up in Waltham a mile or two away from the historic estate. When Harding and his late wife, Susan, moved to the area, his connection to Gore Place deepened.

As a Colonial Dame, Susan's passion for preserving history eventually brought the couple to a Gore Place event, possibly the popular December Evening, which solidified their appreciation for the estate's unique charm and the strong sense of community it fostered. Doug described the feeling of driving through the Gore gates as leaving behind the cares and woes of the outside world.

This feeling resonated deeply with Doug, leading him to join the Board of Governors a year ago. Now, as Chair of the Development Committee, he is focused on the future of the organization. His vision encompasses both ensuring financial stability and expanding the estate's role as a valuable resource for the surrounding communities.

Harding believes the key to Gore Place's continued success lies in cultivating a diverse base of members and supporters. He hopes a wide range of people will experience the transformative feeling of driving through those gates and stepping into a different time, a place where history and community intertwine. His leadership promises to preserve Gore Place not just as a historical landmark, but as a vibrant and welcoming space for generations to come.

A December Evening at Gore Place



James Hunnewell, Jr. in conversation



Nicole Mason and Philip "Flip" Mason



Susan Hunnewell and Robert Storer



Priscilla Anderson and Michael Carter



Clarence Richarson, Tammi Kibler, and Stewart Woodward

Other Recent Events



Top images: guests performing traditional English country dances at the Winter Regency Ball.



Bottom images: our first annual Farm to Table dinner at Gore Place, with cocktails in the Barn and a dinner on the North Lawn at sunset.

NOTEWORTHY



SAVE THE DATE *Spring into Summer* at Gore Place

on

June 11, 2025, at 6:00 p.m.
at 52 Gore St, Waltham, MA 02453

LEARN MORE INFO AND GET
TICKETS AT THIS LINK:



goreplace.org/whats-on/spring-into-summer

INTERESTED IN BECOMING
A SPONSOR FOR THIS
EVENT? CONTACT US AT
THE LINK ABOVE!



NEWEST MEMBERS OF OUR FLOCK!

It's officially starting to feel like springtime at Gore Place, and our first lambs of the year were delivered in early March! Say hello to the newest members of our flock next time you visit the Farm.

NEW FACES AT GORE PLACE



REBECCA DEANS-ROWE

Rebecca joined the Gore Place staff in October of 2024 as our Director of Development. She comes with years of experience working in fundraising and a personal passion for historic preservation.



CRYSTAL BURNEY

Crystal started in January in the newly created position of Family Events Coordinator. With her creativity, she is spearheading our new birthday party offerings at Gore Place! Crystal is a mural artist who comes with significant experience in arts education and farming.



ANNETTE DONNELLY

Annette brings a wealth of experience in small businesses where she developed diverse skills in communication, customer service, marketing, billing, and general office operations. She is joining us as our office manager.



LESTER

Lester is somewhat shy but very food-motivated—he will fit right in on the Farm! You can catch Lester at Puppet Show Story Time every other week. See our website for tickets!



NEW OFFERING: Children's Birthday Parties!

Have your next birthday party at Gore Place! We offer an array of themed birthday events on our unique property inspired by the grounds and our history. Activities include building miniature airplanes, farm activities, and even a delightful tea party.

We'll make your child's next gathering a day to remember!

Starting in May 2025! Visit our website to learn more:
GOREPLACE.ORG/RENTALS/BIRTHDAY-PARTIES