



# GORE PLACE

# THE AGRARIAN

THE NEWSLETTER OF GORE PLACE | FALL 2024 | ISSUE NUMBER 17

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## SOCIAL MEDIA MOMENT



Carrie Midura practices archery at our Jane Austen Garden Party.  
@carriemidura on Instagram



A bowl of peppers and heirloom tomatoes grown from transplants sold at our Plant Sale earlier this spring!  
Erin Milnes Halvey on Facebook



A recent addition to the Gore Place collection, this rare pennant celebrating the aviation meet at the Metz aerodrome on June 15-20, 1911, features a color illustration of a 1911 Bleriot XI monoplane. Dimensions: 26 1/2 x 8 1/2 inches.

## The Metz Aviation Meet

by Diann Ralph, Historian

*“The finest flying New England has ever seen”*

—Aero Weekly, July 1, 1911

When Charles Metz looked out over the old Governor Gore estate with its pastoral grounds and Mansion house, he spotted a business opportunity.

Already an innovator and entrepreneur in bicycles, motorcycles, and automobiles, Metz had recently entered the aviation business. Only seven years after the 1903 Wright Brothers’ first-ever airplane flights, the Waltham-based Metz Company was manufacturing aeroplanes—“air-cars”, as he called them—and plane parts.

In the spring of 1911, Metz purchased the Gore estate with its 125 acres in Watertown and Waltham, just the place for his aeroplane assembly plant and an airfield—a long, flat grassy area, not paved as runways are today.

By June Metz had converted a big barn on the property into a twelve-plane hangar, changed the Mansion into a clubhouse, and transformed the expansive meadow south of the Mansion into the airfield that aviators called “the best in the country.”<sup>1</sup> He was also organizing an aero meet. The year before, the first one ever in America had taken place in California. Metz would now present one of the first big meets of 1911.

### Birdmen

Everything about flying was new and risky. Aircraft designers, mechanics, and pilots constantly tried new things. “Each flight was an experiment” and often dangerous. Plane designs left pilots unprotected. “When you flew, you sat on the edge of the wing, suspended in space on a web of spruce and wires and fabric.”<sup>2</sup> Crashes were common. Between 1908 and 1911, over 100 aviators, along with several passengers, died flying. Governments were talking about regulating this dangerous activity.

Americans were fascinated by the technology, the dangers, and the aviators. “Birdmen”, “flyboys”, and “boy aeronauts” were some of the nicknames for these (almost always) male, mostly young, daring flyers, who risked their lives in the air. Yet, in 1911, most Americans had never seen a plane in flight.

The Metz meet was a chance to see planes in the sky, and from June 15 to June 21 thousands came to watch aviators compete for a total of \$50,000 (\$1.7 million today) in prize money, awarded for long distance flights and competitive events on the airfield, including bomb-dropping and various speed and accuracy challenges.

**The Metz Aviation Meet**  
continued on page 4





# GORE PLACE

## EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

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- Greer Candler, *Vice President*
- Michael Aylward, *Vice President*
- George Kimball, *Treasurer*
- Andrew Chin, *Assistant Treasurer*
- James F. Hunnewell Jr., *Clerk*
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- Beth Hagopian
- Douglas Harding
- Lydia Kimball, *Historic New England*
- Thomas Kohler
- Amey Moot, *The Trustees*
- John Quinn
- Kita Reece
- Clarence Richardson
- Robert Storer
- Stewart Woodward

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- Charlotte Patten

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- Scott Clarke, *Director of Farm and Landscape Operations*
- Linda DeFranco, *Private Events Rentals Manager*
- Lyn Hartel, *Landscape Assistant*
- Lorna Keith, *Administrative Assistant*
- Tammi Kibler, *Business Development Manager*
- Gavin Kleespies, *Executive Director*
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- Thom Roach, *Director of Interpretation*
- Sheila Selby, *Museum Shop Manager*
- Meg Stockton, *Family Educator*
- Gail Wiegner, *Volunteer Coordinator*

## GUIDES

- Miriam Boucher, *Prentice Crosier*
- Mike Dudal, *Lorna Keith*
- Stu Rubinow

## EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR EMERITA

- Susan Robertson

# Letter from Our Board President



Credit: Eric Workman | TMP Images

## Dear Friends of Gore Place,

First off, let us extend our gratitude to Debbie Gates for serving as Interim President for the year just ending September 16, 2024. It was a gracious act, adding to a long list of generous acts by Debbie and Peter Gates over the years.

Secondly, a very hearty thank you to the Governors who are now leaving the Board: Kimberly Amsden, Michael Carter, and William Diercks. Thank you for your time, energy, and all you did over the years.

Gore Place has an exciting past. Before The Gore Place Society purchased the estate in 1935, and long after Christopher and Rebecca Gore owned the property, there were a series of owners. In 1911 Charles Metz bought Gore Place for his personal residence and to house the headquarters of his growing business: the Metz Company, which focused on the manufacture of automobiles, motorcycles and then planes! Metz was an inventor and had formed the Waltham Manufacturing company in 1890, where he designed new bicycles, paddle cars, wagons, and eventually cars.

In 1911, the same year Metz purchased the Gore estate, he used the extensive grounds to host an aerodrome, inviting some of the most famous pilots from around the country to display their versions of early airplanes. These early aeronauts showed off their capacities and skills to huge crowds. In fact, the event was so popular a temporary train station, close to Gore Place, was built to handle the thousands of people arriving from Boston to watch.

Metz's trajectory is a vivid example of the human capacity for building on what is known and embracing commercial and technological changes that are new and transformative. We can't know what the Gores would have thought of all this, but we do know that they embraced technological changes of their time; for example, they installed what may have been the first indoor shower in America and an early central heating system, one of the first in New England!

Please think about joining us this fall and winter for some of our events, including a special talk and tour exploring Charles Metz. Enjoy reading more about Metz, his ventures at Gore Place and its airfield, in this issue.

**Debbie Dobbins**  
President of the Board

## Upcoming Events

**A December Evening**  
December 10, 2024

**Holiday Wagon Rides**  
December 14, 2024

**Jane Austen Holiday Tea**  
December 15, 2024

**Music for the Holly Days**  
December 18, 2024



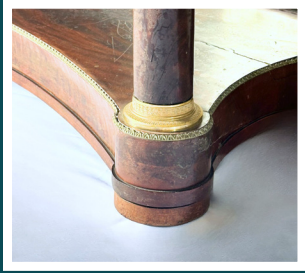
Tickets are available now on our website!

[goreplace.org](http://goreplace.org)

# Vose and Coates Pier Table

By Clark Pearce

The classical pier table that stands inside the East entrance to Gore Place is attributed to the cabinetmaking firm of Vose & Coates, one of the foremost shops in Boston in the 1810s. Its design was adopted directly from French “square” pier tables that were the height of fashion in Paris and Boston at the time. The feet, cut down at some point, will be restored to their correct “inverted flower-pot” form. Nearly identical feet are on a pair of tables that retain their original 1818 bill of sale, from Vose & Coates.



## Letter from the Executive Director



Credit: Photo by Eric Workman | TMP Images.

Gore Place is remarkable. The more I learn about it, the more impressed I am by the site, the organization, and the architecture. In June we hosted a talk by noted architect Jeff Baker (Mesick Cohen Wilson Baker Architects). He highlighted the innovative design of the Mansion and the groundbreaking ways they moved air and water through a Federalist period house. As Mr. Baker said, Gore Place is one of the most important buildings in the Northeast.

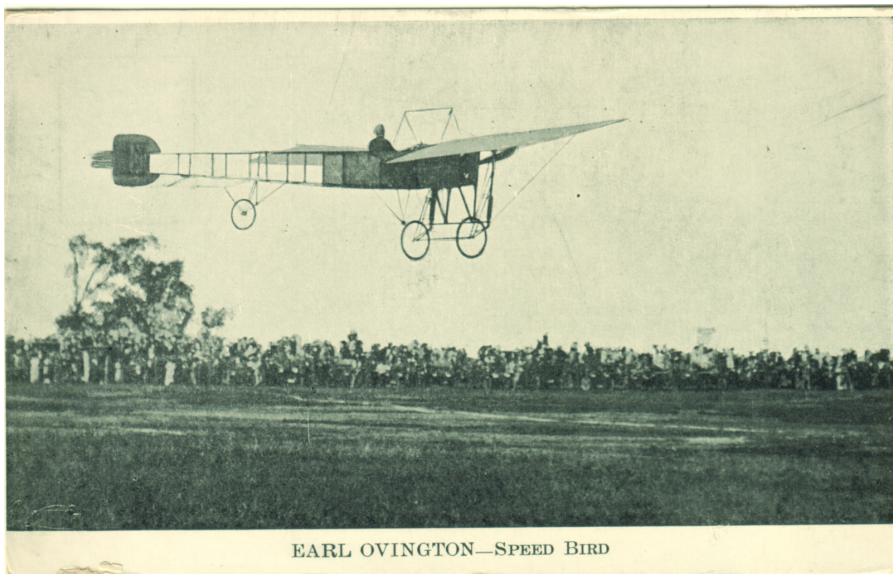
Through a summer with record-breaking temperatures, the Gore Place grounds remained a cool, calm respite from the heat of the city. The trees and flowers made the space feel cooler and the communal benefits that the open space and mature trees offer to both people and animals cannot be overstated.

Providing access to these resources makes Gore Place a wonderful asset to greater Boston. I would like to explore how to bring more people to enjoy our resources. From our membership drive in August, to our traditional skills workshops, to our hosting of special events like Jeff Baker’s talk, the staff of Gore Place is trying to connect with new people and expand our organization’s audience. However, we are always interested in your—our member’s—ideas of people or groups who would enjoy Gore Place. If you have an idea, please feel free to reach out and share it with me.

I hope you have been able to visit our mansion, grounds, or farm, either for an event or just to enjoy the space. I look forward to an exciting autumn on the farm.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Gavin". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Gavin Kleespies



Courtesy of the heirs of Earle L. Ovington, used with permission.

Ovington flying over the Charles River after completing flight over Boston, Waltham Meet, June 15, 1911.

Eight experienced aviators competed. Among the best known were Harry N. Atwood and Earle L. Ovington. Their performances on day one of the meet, the *Boston Journal* wrote, proved that Atwood and Ovington are "the leading American aviators."<sup>3</sup>

## Over Boston's Golden Dome

Just minutes after the meet opened on June 15, Ovington took off in his 70-horsepower Bleriot monoplane. He returned about 30 minutes later, having completed the first ever flight over Boston in an aeroplane.

In Boston Ovington had circled the State House and, as he told it, when almost directly over its "gilt Dome," shut off his engine and dropped 2,500 feet in 20 seconds, then restarted the engine and headed over the harbor. Zooming away, he dropped messages, attached to little parachutes, inviting the mayor and governor to the Metz meet—an act well-suited to the man who would later be America's first official airmail pilot.

On his way back to Waltham, Ovington became lost. Planning to follow the Charles River back, he'd followed the Mystic River instead. At the time, finding your way through the sky was done with hardcopy maps and what one could view from the air. Seeing he was headed in the wrong direction, with a map, he soon found his way to the Charles and climbed "so high I could see the aviation field and its lake 10 miles away in Waltham. It looked like a silver dollar on a bit of soft green velvet. The black crowd bordering the field marked it so plainly that I

found my way back without difficulty."<sup>4</sup>

That same afternoon, Harry Atwood was due to join the Metz meet. He took off from Squantum Peninsula in Quincy, Massachusetts, where he worked as a flight instructor, and headed to Waltham. On the way, he flew his Burgess Wright biplane over the State House, "tilted his plane on its end and circled the golden Dome three times."<sup>5</sup> Atwood had flown over Boston, just an hour after Ovington—something no one had ever done before this day.

These two birdmen in Boston had almost shut down the city. Businesses closed, the Senate adjourned, traffic came to a standstill—everyone wanted to witness the historic flights. A writer at the *Boston Journal* reflected on the huge, excited, cheering crowds, and wrote that "the average human is not yet accustomed to the spectacle of a man circling and soaring at a height of 2000 feet above sea level." This day, he was certain, spectators would long remember.<sup>6</sup>

## The Greatest Day

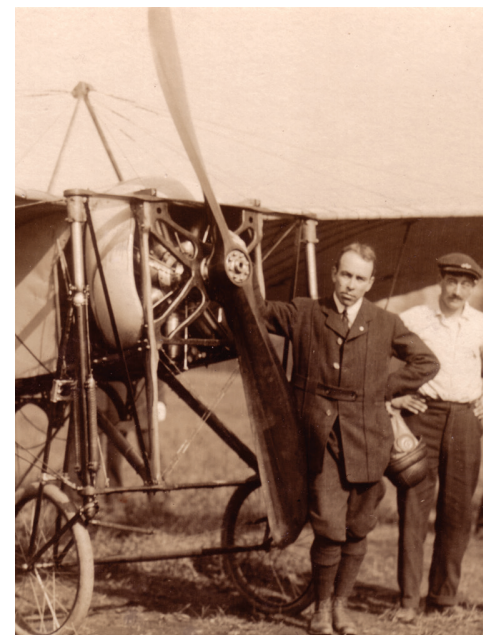
Opening day at Metz Field was historic, and throughout the five-day meet aviators thrilled the crowds with daring feats of flying. For some observers, Saturday, June 17, was the greatest day of all.

Planes were in the air constantly. More than 22,000 crowded into Metz Field for seventeen flights lasting for a total of over three hours flying time. At one point, four types of aircraft were simultaneously visible over the field: a

passenger balloon, a dirigible, a monoplane, and a biplane. On the spur-of-the-moment, Ovington decided to fly with the balloon and did so for almost thirty miles. Then, he went over the Bunker Hill Monument in honor of the Battle's 136th anniversary, and after circling the State House again, returned to Waltham, completing a 50-mile flight. On this day, he flew at his highest altitude ever—the barometer hit 6,682.

The day's most breathtaking sight came from Lincoln Beachey. Considered the greatest aviation stuntman of his day, Beachey flew over to Waltham from a flight exhibition at Readville. Excited spectators at Metz Field spread the word: the famous daredevil flyboy was coming, and all eyes were on the sky. Barely visible at first, he was sighted at 2,000 feet. Pointing his Curtiss biplane down "at a perilous angle," in a tightly held spiral, he came down fast. The crowd watched in silence. Pilots watched, knowing that under this stress, the plane could break apart mid-air. Just before hitting the ground, he leveled the plane. He made it! To loud cheers and applause, Beachey landed safely, completing the longest, unbroken spiral glide ever seen in New England.

All afternoon, other aviators were flying above and around Waltham. An estimated 500,000 people saw planes in the sky that day. One observer concluded, "it would be no rash statement to say that this was the greatest day for American aviation ever chronicled."<sup>7</sup>



Harry N. Atwood in his biplane



## Harry N. Atwood in his biplane

Harris & Ewing, photographer. WRIGHT BROTHERS AIRPLANE, ETC. HARRY ATWOOD., 1911. Photograph. <https://www.loc.gov/item/2016863386/>.

*Aero: America's Aviation Weekly* covered the Metz meet in a two-page article entitled, "Great Flying Done at Waltham Meet." A most successful meet "from a flying standpoint," the *Aero* writer concluded. "It will go down in history as the first where two aviators circled Boston... and from which record-breaking cross-country flights were made."<sup>8</sup> Notably, among other records, the meet had ended with a 75-mile cross-country flying record for Atwood. The publication praised Metz for his hard work in putting on the meet but was less positive about the financial results, including a contract dispute with Atwood. How Metz assessed the meet, we do not know. By 1912 his automobile business

was booming, and evidence suggests he did not pursue the aircraft business after about 1913.

What Charles Metz proudly described in 1911 as "the creation of the most complete aerodrome in America"<sup>9</sup> has left little visible impact on Gore Place and the meet itself is not much remembered. Despite so little to remind us, we know that in 1911, for a few days in June, Metz and the old Gore estate stood at the center of American aviation.

## ENDNOTES

1. *Quincy Daily Ledger*, May 27, 1911
2. Howard Mansfield, *Skylark: The Life, Lies, and Inventions of Harry Atwood*. (Hanover: UP of New England)1999, 21.
3. *Boston Journal*, June 16, 1911.
4. Adelaide Ovington, *An Aviator's Wife*. ( New York: Dodd, Meade, and Company) 1920.
5. *Boston Evening Bulletin*, June 16, 1911
6. *Boston Journal*, June 16, 1911.
7. O.G. Draper, "Greatest Day of Aviation Stunts in the Country's History," *Boston Morning Journal*, June 18, 1911.
8. " Great Flying Done at Waltham Meet," *Aero: America's Aviation Weekly*, Vol. 2, No. 13, July 1, 1911.
9. From an advertisement for the meet. An airport or airfield is a type of aerodrome: a defined area where flight operations can take place, especially one with other facilities, such as hangars, used for flying-related purposes.

## REFERENCES

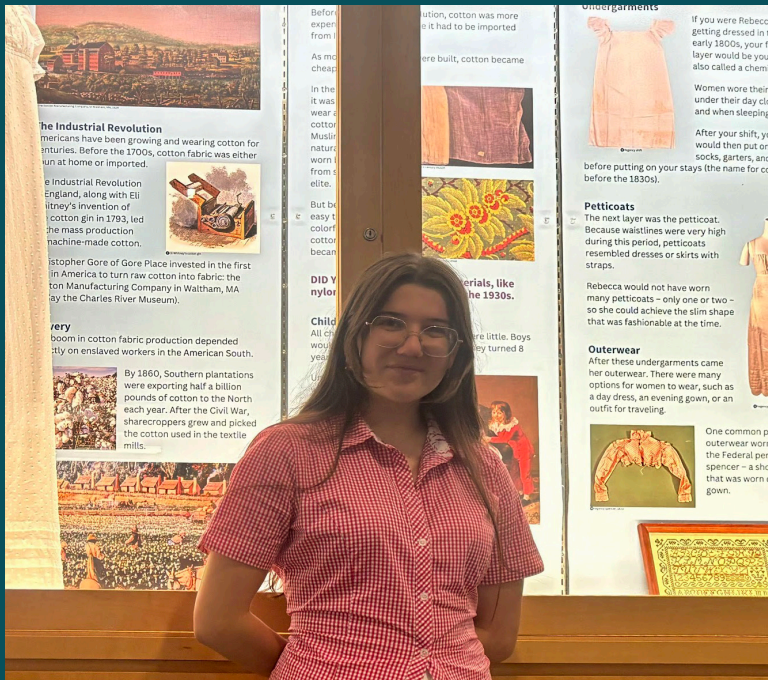
Campbell, Robert D. *Reminiscences of a Birdman*. Uxbridge, MA: Living History Press, LLC, 2009.

Mansfield, Howard. *Skylark: The Life, Lies, and Inventions of Harry Atwood*. Hanover: UP of New England,1999

Ovington Adelaide, *An Aviator's Wife*. NY: Dodd, Meade, and Company, 1920.

Newspapers and Periodicals: *Aero: America's Aviation Weekly*, *Boston Evening Bulletin*, *Boston Herald*, *Boston Journal*, *Quincy Daily Ledger*

Special thanks to the heirs of Earle L. Ovington and to Ovington's biographer, Robert D. Campbell, for permission to use their rarely seen images of Ovington at the Metz meet.



## Summer Intern Projects

This summer Gore Place hosted two interns: **Sarah Toole** and **Dover Hornbeck**.

**Sarah** researched historical textiles to create a display for the Waltham Public Library. As part of the display, Sarah sewed a replica of one of Rebecca Gore's dresses.

**Dover** created both realistic and cartoon drawings of our farm and its animals. Their work will be used for educational programming and for promotional materials.

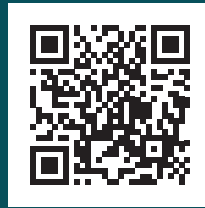
Thank you to the Mount Holyoke College Lynk Program and the Carroll Center for the Blind for funding these internships.

Intern Sarah Toole in front of her library display on Women's Fashion in the Federal Period.



## Traditional Skills Workshops

This summer Gore Place began a new series of adult workshops based around traditional crafts. Taught by Gore Place educators and community artisans, classes included needle felting, weaving, and embroidery. Participants loved the opportunity to try their hand at traditional skills while working with natural materials, like wool, in a unique historical setting.



Scan this QR code to see upcoming workshops and other museum programs!



### COMMUNITY PARTNER **Stewart Woodward**

Stewart Woodward enjoys Sunday walks on the Gore Place Estate with his wife. They appreciate the open space and tranquility so close to their Waltham home.

Noting his interest in the property, Susan Robertson initially invited Stewart to join the Strategic Planning Committee. Over time, his involvement with Gore Place Society increased, and he joined the Board of Governors in September 2015. Since then, he has served on various committees including Building and Grounds, Development, Marketing, and DEAL. Stewart championed the creation of a Community Partners program to increase awareness and support within the business community. His business, Metro West Home Team at Real Broker MA, has been a Community Partner since the inception of the program, and he is now joined by eleven other partners.

Stewart currently serves on the Development and the Grounds Committees. He actively promotes Community Partners and seeks creative ways to fundraise for Gore Place at the annual Sheepshearing Festival.

## Evidence of Gardens at Gore Place

This aerial photo of the North Lawn taken in 2024 reveals evidence of the 1830s-era Lyman Garden, only visible in the summer months when the lack of rain causes the grass to dieback above its buried borders. Learn more about this historic feature in a talk by archaeologist Christa Beranek recorded at our annual meeting in September, now available on our YouTube channel.



Photo by Eric Workman | TMP Images.

# RECENT EVENTS AT GORE PLACE



Watertown elementary school students enjoy a school visit in June.



Members of Col. Bailey's 2nd Mass Regiment at the Sheepshearing Festival in April



Guests at our annual Jane Austen Garden Party in July.

## Spring into Summer 2024



Will White, Kita Reece, Morgan Reece, Brendan Collins



Nancy Place and Lydia Kimball



Georgina Winthrop from Grogan & Company led a successful paddle raise to support Gore Place.



Kimberly Amsden, Charlotte Patten, and Amey Moot



Spring into Summer co-chairs Andrew Chin, Emily Griset, Hadley Powell, and Allie Powell



Visitors watch sheep herding demonstrations at our Sheepshearing Festival.

@rmbakes on Instagram

## Give the Gift of Membership!

A Gore Place membership is the perfect gift for the holidays! Members receive free admission to our annual Sheepshearing Festival, discounted admission to other events, and unlimited daytime guided tours of our 1806 Mansion, just to name a few perks! Share Gore Place with a friend this holiday season.

Scan the QR code to learn more about membership benefits, and how to gift a membership.



## Reaching the Goal

This August, Gore Place had great success with its first membership drive. Our members and donors provide the support that keep the sheep and goats cared for, the grounds available to the public, and the doors open at our amazing 1806 mansion. We set out to increase our membership by 50 people, either through new memberships or bringing back people who had let their membership lapse. While some may think that a membership drive in August, a month when many people are traveling, is foolhardy, we not only met our goal, but exceeded it with 58 new (or newly rejoined) members!

## A Noble Visit

On April 12, 2025, Gore Place will host the Countess of Derby, who has produced a new book with noted historian Andrew O'Shaughnessy, on the travels of Edward Stanley, later 14th Earl of Derby and three times Prime Minister to Queen Victoria. In 1824, Edward Stanley traveled from Liverpool on an 18-month adventure that brought him through New England, where he met the most prominent citizens. Stanley later explored the St. Lawrence River and the Great Lakes of Ontario and Erie, crossing the Appalachian Mountains to travel down the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers to New Orleans. The talk will explore this adventure and the reflections of a British nobleman traveling through Antebellum America.

## Celebrating Juneteenth

To honor the Juneteenth national holiday, Gore Place offered free tours of the Mansion that celebrated Boston-area Black activists, including our own Robert Roberts, the last butler during Gore's time. As well as being the first commercially published Black author for his book *The House Servant's Directory*, Roberts was a civil and religious leader in the free Black community in Boston. Other featured Boston-area activists included William Cooper Nell—a Black author and historian, Lewis Hayden—Messenger to the MA Secretary of State and Member of the General Court of MA, and Maria W. Stewart—an abolitionist, women's rights activist, and public speaker.

## A New Face on the Farm

If you visit our sheep you may notice a new member of the flock. To maintain the genetic diversity of the stock, we have brought in a new ram. Born on April 11 at Ashford Heights Farm in Adams, Massachusetts, Maximus arrived at Gore Place on July 26. Although he is still getting used to life at Gore Place, we look forward to meeting many mini-Maximi in the coming years.

## Evening Tour Highlights

Chamber pots and hygiene, scandalous behavior, romance, and bad lighting are just some of the special themes highlighted during our popular evening tours.

See the mansion in a whole new light. Upcoming themes include *At Home with the Gores*, *Living In the Dark*, and *Holiday Decor*. Evening tours are offered monthly throughout the year. Learn more about these and other fabulous events on the *What's On* page of our website at [goreplace.org](http://goreplace.org).

