



## GORE PLACE

# THE AGRARIAN

THE NEWSLETTER OF GORE PLACE | SPRING 2019 | ISSUE NUMBER 6

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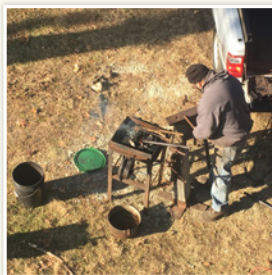
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### Social Media Moment



**It's not every day that master blacksmith Dean Rantz of Rock Village Forge is here forging a handrail for our new staircase.**

Share your memories and photos with us. Tag @goreplace on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter.

### In Memoriam

We sadly report the death of former Gore Place Board member Elizabeth "Bun" Ames of Westwood and North Easton in September 2018. Bun joined the Board in 1974 and remained an active Gore Place member until 1998. She served on numerous Board committees but was particularly fond of the farm and landscape. She will always be remembered for her pleasant manner, kind words and steadfast support. Gore Place was indeed fortunate to count Bun Ames as a friend.



Mrs. John Gore (Mary Babcock) about 1815, Gilbert Stuart (American, 1755-1828), oil on canvas. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.



Warwick Castle by the River Avon

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## A Whimsical Destiny: A Portrait of Mary Babcock Gore

Mary Gore's 1815 portrait hangs prominently at Gore Place on the formal staircase above those of her husband John and his uncle Christopher and aunt Rebecca Gore. The image, painted by distinguished American portraitist Gilbert Stuart, conveys Mary's beauty, refinement and position. Few sources exist that can tell us more about Mary, but she did keep a diary during a family visit to England in 1813-1814.<sup>1</sup> It is through this travel journal that we see an intimate side of the woman in the portrait.

Mary and John's trip to England was quite unusual. England and America were at war. Like most tourists, they planned visits to well-known historic and cultural sites, but John, a wealthy merchant and a Federalist opposed to the war, likely had business and political reasons for the trip [see side article] and little time for Mary's sightseeing. The Gores sailed first to neutral Portugal and then found passage to England on a British ship-of-war, the 38-gun frigate *Melpomene*, named for the Greek Muse of Tragedy.

War and political conflict at home were on Mary's mind as they reached Falmouth, January 9, 1814: "At this very period of last year," she recalled with pro-English passion, "I was in the bosom of my unfortunate country. . . shocked and disgusted with the detestable tricking of political intrigue,

hearing this great and glorious people [the English] anathematized by scrubs unworthy of even the name of men. Now behold me, landed from an English ship-of-war, my footsteps for the first time pressing the soil of my Forefathers, supported by the arm of an English officer. . . . Can anything be more whimsical than my destiny?"

The officer helping Mary off the ship was likely its 30-year-old Commanding Officer Robert Rowley. These British frigate captains were respected, well-mannered, intelligent, often wealthy, experienced and daring, "the finest officers in the service. . . . the greatest sailors of their time."<sup>2</sup> No wonder Captain Rowley became the "gallant sailor" of Mary's journal. In February attending a London theatre, Mary "suddenly felt a tap" on her shoulder; it was Rowley and she "was truly delighted to see him." What exactly took place over the next few days, Mary never made clear.

Her journal records that on March 2 at a Covent Garden theater, Rowley "met us" for a performance. "As he sat by me, the time tho very short, was spent in recapitulation of what had been. He rode home with me and on his taking

**This issue of *The Agrarian* uncovers the stories behind portraits on display at the Gore Mansion. Turn the page to read more.**

*Continued on front of the insert*



## GORE PLACE

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## Letter from our Board President

Dear Friends of Gore Place,

What fun I have had this winter traveling the country, telling everyone I met about Gore Place! After all, how many historic houses can crow about the restoration of three landmark buildings, the conservation of an amazingly early Copley portrait (when he was in his teens), and accommodating accessibility needs with modern answers? You will read all about these efforts and more in this newsletter and immediately understand why I am so proud of Gore Place!

Our recent newsletters have introduced interesting stories of people from the Gore era. This issue tells us about Mary Babcock Gore, whose exquisite portrait by Gilbert Stuart (on loan to us from the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston) hangs at the top of the spiral staircase. Mary was a beauty, but she was much more interesting than that. You will also read about the work of Amherst College senior, Jonathan Jackson, to recreate a "portrait" of his ancestor Robert Roberts, butler to the Gores. He is using his camera to paint a picture of Roberts. The results are amazing!

I urge you to visit our historic estate soon if you have not done so recently. Certainly our program mix gives you many excuses to do so. I have no doubt that you will be surprised and pleased by all that you see and learn. I will close with my continuing sentiment: I encourage you to join us in spreading the word far and wide about our wonderful museum! We're humble enough to say we honestly can use your help; we genuinely appreciate it!

*Sincerely,*

Thomas Thaler

## WELCOME TO OUR NEW STAFF

Last fall two new staff members were added to our team: Marisa Calise as our new Education Specialist after Susan Katz retired and Aaron Rawley as our Volunteer Coordinator when Dori Coddington's work schedule changed. We appreciate all the care that Susan and Dori took for Gore Place and wish them well in their new adventures. Marisa graduated from Rhode Island College. Aaron graduated from UMass Dartmouth. Four years ago Aaron was a summer intern for Gore Place through the Carroll Center. It was nice to welcome him back. This spring we are looking forward to welcoming Diana Roberts as our Director of Institutional Advancement. Diana has an extensive resume of successful development work around Boston and we are very pleased that Diana will now join the Gore Place team.

## RECENT NEWS FROM THE ESTATE

### Collections

We are pleased to report the painting "The Two Daughters of John Gore" by John Singleton Copley has been cleaned and stabilized thanks to a generous donor.

### Farm

We welcomed five new registered Leicester Longwool sheep to our flock.

### 540 Campaign

We are in the final phases of this important fundraising appeal to improve the experience for all visitors to the mansion, stabilize the 1835 farmer's cottage and elevate the agrarian landscape. The campaign totaled \$1,080,000. We are still soliciting donations to finish some smaller projects but we want to thank all our many members and friends who have given so generously as well as the City of Waltham CPA Fund, the MA Cultural Facilities Fund, the Sunfield Fund at Gore Place and Foundation for Metrowest. Gore Place preserves an early time in the history of Boston. These projects are in support of the importance of historic preservation and the need for universal access. For further information, please contact Susan Robertson at 781-894-2798.



## A DECEMBER EVENING 2018



More than 175 guests enjoyed an elegant evening in the Gore Mansion, with hors d'oeuvre by Cuisine Chez Vous, bourbon tasting, music by the David Newsam Trio and shopping in our Handmade for the Holidays Boutique.



All A December Evening photos by Eric Workman | TMP Images

### Noteworthy

#### Reaching New Audiences with Accessibility

Accessibility is a major initiative for Gore Place, and this spring we embark on two projects that will bring important improvements for all visitors.

#### Moving UP!

Gore Place is thrilled to be part of the 2019 cohort of the Innovation and Learning Network (ILN), the professional development course of the UP (Universal Participation) program of the Mass Cultural Council, a state agency and long-standing supporter of Gore Place. The ILN provides organizations the opportunity for collaborative learning with the goal of improving all aspects of their operations for people with disabilities. Upon completion of the training, Gore Place will join more than 60 other nonprofits throughout Massachusetts in the UP Program, with access to special grant funding and other resources.

#### 21st c. Technology in the 1806 Mansion

See the upper floors of the Gore Mansion without leaving the first floor! This spring Gore Place will debut a live video feed, a part of the 540 Campaign. This project will provide an equitable tour experience to visitors who cannot ascend the stairs. Through the video feed, visitors on the first floor can watch a live video of the tour as the tour group visits the mansion's upper floors. Visitors will also have the chance to ask questions of the tour guide and converse with their tour group through a two-way audio connection. Other components of the Upper Floor Accessibility Project, including multisensory components, touchable objects, and 360 images of the rooms, will be installed later in 2019. This project will be produced by Boston Productions Inc. of Norwood, MA in collaboration with Gore Place staff members.

### Whimsical Destiny Continued from page 1

leave, I gave him a letter written before his arrival in London believing that I should not see him again." The following night on their way to Bath, the Gores stayed at an inn by the Thames. Mary watched "the moon sweetly reflected on the rippling current" and wrote, "Last evening at this time I was in Covent Theater, gay and almost happy. Now I am sad and musing upon the misery and even folly of forming friendships that must be broken, I'll to bed and dream." [Underline is Mary's.] At Bath, Mary found a letter from Rowley. Reading it, she "almost choked, so sadly, so feelingly does he write, surely my friend you overrate my powers. It must be your own feeling heart which gives it eloquence." She wrote to him the next day—her final mention of the gallant sailor. Was this a flirtation made dramatic by the upheavals of war or by her husband's business distractions?

By the time Mary read Rowley's last letter, he was sailing to America to join Admiral Cockburn's fleet in harassing coastal towns along Chesapeake Bay and, eventually, to attack the cities of Washington and Baltimore. As he sailed, Rowley wrote his cousin "I hope to God we shall be successful and lessen the dignity, and the pomp, of a misjudged and impolitic people." He believed "Federalists are gaining ground—the Cry for peace is resounded where they dare open their lips....

there will be a division in the states no doubt."<sup>3</sup> Perhaps what Mary and Rowley shared were these passionate politics and a hope to end the war? Or was it something more personal?

By July 4, Mary and John were touring the Midlands north of London, where Mary enjoyed rural scenery and castles, especially Warwick's medieval castle on the bluffs above the River Avon. She said they lingered there "until we no longer in decency could stay." Mary gazed at it all, she wrote, "till my heart and eyes ached." In Llangollen on the 10th, after dinner, they visited the Valle Crucis Abbey. Here Mary's journal ends with no explanation. We know little of the rest of the trip, except for one awful twist of fate. The Gores' daughter Louisa, at boarding school in London, was buried there on November 4, 1814.<sup>4</sup> Perhaps Mary's voyage aboard *Melpomene* was prophetic. Her "whimsical destiny" had turned tragic.

John Gore lived only a few years more, dying in Boston in 1817. Commander Rowley continued in the service of the British Navy. He married in 1822 in Grenada in the Eastern Caribbean. He died in England in 1834. It is unlikely that Mary ever saw Commander Rowley again. We know little about Mary's second husband, Joseph Russell, except that her grandson called the marriage "an unhappy connection." Mary died in Paris in 1836.

Mary's "whimsical destiny" continues with her portrait by Gilbert Stuart. Mary's daughter Eliza inherited the portrait and later willed it to her daughter, who gave the portrait to the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston in 1921. Selected for two major exhibits, the portrait appeared at the 1876 Centennial in Philadelphia and in the MFA's groundbreaking 1981 American art exhibit in China. In both instances, works were chosen to represent the history of American art and American ideas, and both exhibits are considered influential milestones in the history of art. Mary's portrait is now on long-term loan to Gore Place. You can view Mary on tours of the Mansion.

1. Mary Babcock Gore, Photocopy of untitled manuscript journal, 1813-1814, Waltham, MA, Gore Place Society files.

2. John D. Gresham, "The Powerful Frigates of the British Navy," *Warfare History*, November 10, 2018, <https://warfarehistorynetwork.com/daily/military-history/the-powerful-frigates-of-the-british-royal-navy/>

3. Willard Sterne Randall, *Unshackling America: How the War of 1812 Truly Ended the American Revolution* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2017) 324-326.

4. Christopher Gore to Rufus King, April 11, 1815. From Christopher Gore we learn: "We have painful news from John Gore. Their eldest daughter, about 11 years old, died at a boarding school in England. The news of her sickness reached France in time for the mother to return two days before the child's decease. The father was then undergoing an operation for a fistula."

Researched and written by Diann Ralph Strausberg, Historian.

## John Gore: A Gentleman Spy?

Francis Cabot Lowell urgently needed a reply from Paul Moody. Lowell's newly organized Boston Manufacturing Company [BMC] planned to revolutionize textile production at its Waltham Mill. Moody, a brilliant machinist, would work on the many machines needed to automate and unite all the steps to convert raw cotton into cloth. On October 12, 1813, Lowell wrote Moody:

We can "send to England to get any information we wish. . . . write to me . . . whether you wish any information of any kind about the construction of any of the machinery, or the manner in which any part of the process is performed. . . . the gentleman will leave for England in a few days."<sup>1</sup>

England legally protected its industrial innovations. But to bypass laws against taking design drawings out of the country, Lowell had memorized English power loom details while on a family trip. Now he had a "gentleman" who could get more, even during war with England.

Was this spy John Gore, motivated by his recent \$10,000 investment in BMC? England might welcome a visit from this anti-war Federalist with commercial ties to England. His wife Mary's journal recorded their trip beginning with their arrival in Portugal on December 3, 1813. A key detail, because given a typical sailing time of between five and seven weeks, the arrival date fits Lowell's gentleman who left Boston shortly after mid-October. And later in England, Mary noted a full, tiring day visiting the "manufactories" in Birmingham, a center of the industrial revolution.

No records confirm the spy's identity or achievements, and evidence for the spy being Gore, while persuasive, is circumstantial. We do know he was President of the BMC for two years following his return to Boston.

1. Francis Cabot Lowell to Paul Moody, *Letter*, October 12, 1813, cited in Chaim M. Rosenberg, *The Life and Times of Frances Cabot Lowell, 1775-1817* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2011) 238.



Portrait of John Gore III by John Trumbull. From the collection of Gore Place Society.



# A New Portrait of Robert Roberts

Gore Place is exploring new interpretations of Robert Roberts, butler to the Gores during the last two years of Christopher Gore's life. While working for Gore, Roberts published *The House Servant's Directory*, a book still read today, which details how to manage a home like Gore Place. But Roberts' life extended well beyond his role as butler. An author and leader in Boston's free black community struggling to claim full citizenship, Roberts was active in education, black reform and anti-slavery movements. With his varied roles in mind, we are expanding our view of Roberts and asking new questions about his life and work.

Over the past year, Gore Place has gained a better understanding of Roberts' life through the artwork of Jonathan Jackson, a senior studio arts major at Amherst College. Jonathan also happens to be the great-great-great-great-grandson of Robert Roberts. Jonathan has been studying Roberts for his senior thesis. Jonathan's photographs, taken at Gore Place over the past year, are both a portrait of Roberts and a self-portrait of the artist. The artworks examine issues related to history and the past, and the forces that control identity. Jonathan's photographs for this project have won awards from the Society for Photographic Education and New Delta Review.

The photographs will be exhibited at Amherst College in April. Our goal for these efforts is to gain attention for Roberts, whose story deserves a wider audience, and to provide Gore Place visitors with new views into early American history and its uses for today. Stay tuned for news about how we will showcase Jonathan's photographs at Gore Place.

## A Little Background

Who are those men in the portraits hanging on the walls behind Tom Thaler and Jonathan Jackson in the photo above right?

The gentleman wearing the red coat is Captain John Williams of Connecticut. Painted sometime between 1780 and 1790, at least one expert believes the portrait to be the work of John Johnston (1753-1818). Johnston was an apprentice to Christopher Gore's father, John. Johnston's portraits of the senior Gore and his wife Frances currently grace the walls of the Gore Place Library.

The portrait of the soberly-dressed younger man strikes quite a different tone. Charles Thomas Gore was the son of a distant cousin of Christopher Gore (also named Christopher Gore). While in New Orleans, Charles contracted a disease (possibly yellow fever) and died in 1837 age nineteen. This portrait was likely painted soon after his death using an earlier miniature (also on display in the room) as a guide.



Tom Thaler (Amherst College alumnus), president of the Board of Governors at Gore Place, with Amherst College senior Jonathan Jackson, in the Gentlemen's Sitting Room of the Gore Mansion. Photo by Jonathan Jackson.



An award-winning photograph from Jonathan Jackson's senior thesis.

## Upcoming Programs—Join Us!

### Tot Time at the Farm

Check the website for dates.

### Tot Time at the Nature Playscape

Check the website for dates.

### Concerts in the Carriage House

April 9 and 23, May 14 and 28, June 11 and 25, July 9 and 23, August 13 and 27, September 10, 7:30 pm

### Moonlight Tours

April 5 and 19, May 10 and 24, June 7 and 21, July 19, August 2 and 16, September 6, 7:30 pm

### 32nd Annual Sheepshearing Festival

April 27, 10 am to 5 pm

### Salad Bowl Workshop

May 5, 11 am to 1 pm

### Plant Sale

May 17 and 18, 8 am to 4 pm,  
May 19, 8 am to 12 pm

### Spring Into Summer Dinner Dance

June 12

### Be Inspired: A Celebration of Floral Design

June 12 through 14

### "The Garden Tourist" Illustrated Lecture by Jana Milbocker

June 13, 7 pm

### Floral Design Demonstration by Trish Scozzafava and Jessica Pohl

June 14, 7 pm

### Corn Roasts

August 11, 18 and 25, 4–7 pm

### Free Fun Friday

Check the website for date.

Advance tickets required for some programs.  
Please check our website, [goreplace.org](http://goreplace.org),  
for complete information.



## Find the Perfect Gift at our New Shop!

We have a new permanent gift shop in the Mansion! Our shop features gifts handmade or designed in the United States, with many made locally in the Boston area. Find custom Gore Place wares, like our signature coffee, tote bags and these Gore Mansion mugs handmade by Rachel Vitko Pottery of Minneapolis.



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