



1935-2020

GORE PLACE

CELEBRATING 85 YEARS
OF PRESERVATION

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Snowpeople on the south
side of the Mansion.

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THE AGRARIAN

THE NEWSLETTER OF GORE PLACE | SPRING 2020 | ISSUE NUMBER 8



From the Archives of Gore Place Society

Mr. Henry Vinton Long, Mrs. Bowen White, Mrs. Charles Higginson and Gore Place's first director, Mrs. Helen Patterson, visited an antiques auction in Cohasset, MA on August 30, 1939.

Eight Days in May: The Race to Save a National Treasure

2020 marks the 85th anniversary of Gore Place Society. While we are celebrating the remarkable achievements those 85 years have brought, let's take time to remember the people and events that made these achievements possible. What makes this story so incredible in the chapters of American historic preservation is that the people involved had only a few days to raise a substantial down payment before the wrecker's ball demolished the home, making way for a new housing development. This was a race against time!

It all began on a bright day in May 1935.

Wednesday, May 8, 1935 The weather cold and clear, field secretary of the Trustees of Public Reservations Bradford Williams visits Gore Place to see what arrangements he can make with representatives of the Waltham Savings Bank towards the purchase of the estate by the Colonial Dames. He is shocked to learn a group of developers has already made an offer on the property. It looks as though Gore Place will fall to the wrecking ball.

Thursday, May 9 The fair weather continues. Williams discovers the bankers ready to accept the developer's offer of \$75,000. Williams convinces them to delay the sale for five days while he organizes support for a counter offer.

Friday, May 10 Williams reports the situation to the Standing Committee of the Trustees of Public Reservations. They decide the \$75,000 price-tag makes it impossible for the Trustees to act alone.

Saturday, May 11 Young Boston architect Philip Dana Orcutt gets word of the crisis. A passionate preservationist, Orcutt calls William Sumner Appleton of the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities (SPNEA). Appleton founded SPNEA (now Historic New England) a quarter-century before and was well aware what the loss of Gore Place would mean to future generations.

According to Dr. Charles Hosmer, Jr., in *Preservation Comes of Age: From Williamsburg to the National Trust, 1926-1949, Volume I*, Orcutt will later relate,

Bradford Williams telephoned me and said, "Too bad, we've lost Gore Place." I said, "What happened?" He said, "A group of developers have put a deposit with the bank, and the bank has told me they are going to accept that on Monday morning. The house is going to be torn down and the land...made into a subdivision." I said, "The hell we have...Stand by your telephone a little while." I said, "Meet me...I'm going to put some dynamite under Sumner Appleton. We're going out to the bank."¹

Continued on page 4



GORE PLACE

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Letter from our Board President

Dear Friends of Gore Place,

How wonderful to be celebrating 85 years for Gore Place Society! In this issue of *The Agrarian*, you will read about how America almost lost the historic Gore Mansion. Christopher Gore was not nationally famous, but the home that Rebecca and he left behind rivaled any home of its era and continues to do so. Our founders had the prescience to realize that and pulled off a remarkable achievement for such a small group. They clearly recognized a national treasure! We celebrate them with gratitude!

How far we have come from such shaky beginnings. We are now one of only 1,070 accredited museums in the nation and very few of those are historic homes. Our buildings and our collections are in beautiful condition and they continue to reveal new information about the graciousness of the Gore era. Gore Place has developed a reputation for excellence in its programming and the historic estate has become a resource for the community. The founders would be proud!

We will recognize 85 years of historic preservation in a variety of ways throughout the year. A highlight will be the annual *Spring into Summer* dinner and dance in June with the Bo Winiker Orchestra. This will be the fifth year of this beautiful party. Do come and enjoy the festivities, meet old friends and make new ones!

Remember, we're humble enough to say we honestly can use your help; we genuinely appreciate it.

Sincerely,

Thomas Thaler

Don't miss
*Spring into
 Summer!*

Friday June 12

IN MEMORIAM

LYDIA OGILBY

Lydia Ogilby, a longtime Belmont resident and active member of Gore Place Society, passed away at her home on November 1, 2019. She was 98. Lydia grew up on the historic Richardson Farm in Belmont. She inherited the farm and believed so strongly in historic preservation that she arranged a permanent agricultural preservation restriction on the land. Lydia was involved in Belmont town affairs serving as Chairwoman of the Belmont Historic District Commission and as a Town Meeting member. At Gore Place, she was very active in organizing handmade crafts for the annual holiday boutique. Her Maine blueberry jam was always a sellout! Lydia's kindness and generosity will be missed.

WILLIAM LYNCH

Former Gore Place Governor William Lynch died in September 2019. He was 76. Bill was a consultant in the investment management industry. He was a Gore Place Governor from 2008-2014 and served on our Development Committee. He had a keen interest in supporting and funding educational programs at the museum and he was a great source of information for the staff about interesting new programming at other sites. He also served on the board of the Cape Ann Museum in Gloucester and he was a donor to both museums. His wisdom and enthusiasm will be missed by both organizations.

Robert Roberts' Quiet Activism

Robert Roberts achieved a level of mastery in gentleman's service almost unknown in early America. He turned his years of experience into a how-to manual for domestic servants: *The House Servant's Directory*, published in 1827, while he worked for the Gores.

Roberts filled the book with what he called "genuine" instructions, guaranteed to work—rules, procedures, advice on dress and manners, recipes, and more—all that a head manservant needed to run an elite household. He added a wish as he finished his manuscript: "I sincerely hope that this work may do the same good that I expected, when beginning to write it." What good did he expect? Why did he write this book?

With the generous support of a Mass Humanities Project Grant, Gore Place explored these questions for new insights into Roberts, and developed a new program about the man, his writing and his activism.¹ Roberts' book emerges as a kind of "quiet activism" inspired by his free black community and its commitment to self-improvement to combat racism.

Roberts worked on *The Directory* in his candlelit bedchamber upstairs at Gore Place. As he sat to write, his mind turned from the refined, elite world of the Gores' country house to his own community in Boston, fighting for equal rights in the face of increasing discrimination.²

Lacking political power, Roberts and other community leaders embraced ideas of self-improvement, of individual intellectual and moral development. Successful men were obligated to help others improve, just as Roberts does with his book. Activist Maria W. Stewart, Roberts' Boston neighbor, voiced the community's belief that self-improvement, widely practiced, could have wide-ranging impact: "Prejudice would gradually diminish, and the whites would be compelled to say, unloose those fetters!"³

Roberts put his professional expertise to work in support of self-improvement for young black men. In Boston and in other cities, these young men lacked opportunity. Educated or not, most were offered only low-paying, low-skilled work like domestic service or loading and unloading cargo ships.⁴ Roberts wanted to help. I "address myself," he said, introducing *The Directory*, to young men new to service. With his mastery of the profession, he could train them for higher-

level manservant positions, a "good position," he wrote, with "comforts, privileges, and pleasures."

His instructing goes beyond job skills. He teaches the dignity of a job well-done, whatever one's station in life. He elevates the servant job by demonstrating the skills, artistry, and intelligence it requires. He advises on moral behavior and character development. Roberts knows a competent servant is useful to an employer, but he stresses how the servant, too, can benefit. His message to young men is clear: you have the power to improve your life and create your own identity—self-making in the face of obstacles.

Roberts knows the trials servants face and the increasingly brutal nature of racism. Persevere, he counsels, and one can create a good life even within a society of loud and strong voices saying otherwise. As Roberts would say, you can "take control of your business."

By Diann Ralph Strausberg, Historian.

1. See www.goreplace.org for program dates.

2. The Gores lived at their Waltham country house March through December and spent winters at their Boston home. Roberts moved with them between Waltham and the city.

3. Maria W. Stewart, "Lecture Delivered at the Franklin Hall Boston," September 21, 1832. In Patrick Rael, "Free Black Activism in the Antebellum North," *The History Teacher* (February 2006), 248.

4. James Oliver Horton and Lois E. Horton. *Black Bostonians: Family Life and Community Struggle in the Antebellum North*. Holmes & Meier, revised edition (2000).



A Federal period tavern table in Roberts' room in the Gore Mansion. Roberts might have written his book on a similar desk.

Gore Place is working on a new edition of *The House Servant's Directory*, with much more about Roberts' life, writing and activism.

Noteworthy

Retirement News

Gore Place is losing two of its favorite collections and interpretation staff members this spring. Lana Lewis, our collections manager, is retiring after 25 years and Sue Martin, our former volunteer coordinator and a long time guide and educator, is retiring after 20 years. Both Lana and Sue worked hard to make Gore Place the best Federal house museum in the region. We would say that they succeeded! Their efforts will be missed and we will hope to see them again often.

Grant Awards

Gore Place has received grants to fund visits to the estate for more than 600 Waltham and Watertown elementary school children. Grants received this year for elementary school programs include funding from Waltham and Watertown Cultural Councils, Waltham and Watertown Community Foundations and Watertown Savings Bank. Gore Place secures funding for in-school visits and transportation to the estate.

Grantors for adult programs include Mass Humanities (Robert Roberts tours) and Foundation for Metrowest (The Memory Project).

Women's History Programs

Rebecca Gore may have lived at Gore Place before the suffrage movement began, but she would have been interested in the two talks on women of the 18th and early 19th centuries to be offered this spring: costume historian Nancy McCarthy will show women's clothing from the Revolution to the Civil War, and our own historian, Diann Strausberg, will tell the story of Phebe Bliss Emerson Ripley, a leading lady of Concord, MA at the time of the Revolution. Thank you to Diann for arranging these talks. Both programs are supported in part by grants from Waltham and Weston Cultural Councils, local agencies which are supported by the Mass Cultural Council, a state agency.

Jonathan Jackson's Exhibition

Jonathan Jackson, a recent graduate of Amherst College and a descendant of Robert Roberts, butler to the Gores, gave a gallery talk in February to accompany his award-winning photography exhibition inspired by Roberts' book, *The House Servant's Directory*. Roberts wrote this book while working for Christopher Gore. Jonathan also recorded Roberts' words for the new tour about Robert Roberts, *To Do the Good I Expected*. Read more about the tour and Roberts' work on this page.

Eight Days in May Continued from page 1

Orcutt and Appleton along with Bradford Williams and Helen Patterson descend upon the bank where a “short and fierce argument” with the bankers ensues. Orcutt tells them, “*You’d never forgive yourself...if you let this part of the heritage of America just be torn down for a few dollars when you can get just as many dollars if you wait perhaps a little longer.*” With that admonishment, Orcutt writes a check for \$1,000 as a deposit (despite having only a few hundred in the bank), confident they can make up the balance by Monday. Now, this fierce foursome hurry home to launch a frenzied telephone campaign with the goal of gaining pledges for the additional money in just two days. Along the way, Appleton enlists the help of Trustees deputy Bertram Little. The Telephone Marathon begins. It will go on well into the following day.²

Sunday, May 12 No rest for the weary. The Telephone Marathon continues.

Monday, May 13 The day breaks cloudy and showers threaten. An emergency meeting of the combined boards of SPNEA, the Trustees of Public Reservations and the Massachusetts Society of Architects convenes at the Otis House. They are there to assess the results of the Telephone Marathon and to decide whether or not the Gore Place campaign has a future. Bradford Williams reports \$5,000 in pledges. Appleton commits SPNEA to \$5,000 despite having received only \$1,500 in pledges.³ After 3 hours of discussion, the collective boards agree to take on the mortgage of \$60,000, taking title with a down payment of \$15,000. Gore Place Society is born.⁴

Tuesday, May 14 The clouds linger. Appleton and Orcutt inform the bank they are ready to make an initial payment. They schedule a meeting for the following day.

Wednesday, May 15 The day is fair but unseasonably cool, the local paper predicting an evening frost. Appleton and Orcutt make their way to the offices of the Waltham Savings Bank where, on behalf of the freshly minted Gore Place Society, they sign the purchase agreement. With the stroke of a pen, the country home of Christopher and Rebecca Gore is saved for posterity. In eight short days, a handful of heroes have raised a small fortune and saved a national treasure. Gore Place endures.

The race is won; now comes the real work.

In addition to concentrating on the restoration, Orcutt devotes himself to raising money. He calls on one man every week for a year, reporting progress. Though he never asks the man for a contribution, at the end of the year, he is handed a check for \$10,000. Although he has no expectation of receiving anything more, Orcutt continues to call on the contributor. He is surprised to receive an additional \$10,000, sometime later.

The first director’s report to the Board of Gore Place Society outlines the many challenges facing them. Serving as Corresponding Secretary, Orcutt writes, “*...the House had been used as a roadhouse, a bar projected into the State Reception Hall (Great Hall) and the Oval Room, it was filthy beyond description, littered with debris, scarred with abuse. Several tons of trash and dirt were removed to the dump.*” He continues, “*On the grounds we were faced with the sad prospect of many dead, dying and weakened trees.*”

In its early years, other problems beset the new organization. A Howard Johnson restaurant is built on Main Street directly across from the estate, resulting in trash being strewn in the parking lot and on the grounds. Skaters using the pond set fires on the property. The City of Waltham places a lien on the property for unpaid taxes relating to sewage improvements. The Great New England Hurricane of 1938 does extensive damage to the house and grounds. That same year, a burst water main floods the basement, and vandals knock down the Gore Place sign.

The main financial problem remains the \$3,000 yearly interest on the mortgage. The first report states, “*...to make possible the restoration, we must eliminate the mortgage. Perhaps not as romantic as some of the other features, it is equally vital, and we must be businesslike as well as romantic.*”

It isn’t all trials and tribulations. In 1936, the director reports, “*...many repairs done to the building, painting and cleaning. The house was used for two gatherings: 1902 Sewing Circle luncheon and the Colonial Dames Tea.*” And every director’s report until 1945 notes the steady reduction of the outstanding mortgage.

The 1945 Report to the Board states the mortgage is reduced to \$5,000. The March 6 report says the Society has paid off the mortgage and established an endowment fund.

In concluding the first Annual Report of Gore Place Society dated December 19, 1936, Corresponding Secretary Philip Dana Orcutt writes, “*The future of Gore Place is in the hands of all of us. The continuance of the loyal help and cooperation of all the members of the Society and its friends can make of Gore Place a living memorial of the greatness of our country’s past—a monument to the infinite possibilities of the future. It is in your hands.*”

Eight days. And now it is 85 years later and the Society is stronger than ever. The estate moves closer and closer to becoming the destination the founders envisioned: the Mansion that was almost lost continues to reveal its secrets of gracious 19th c. living in all seasons, the Carriage House is restored to welcome guests and the Farmer’s Cottage anchors Gore’s “Farm at Waltham.” Of course, there’s more to do—the landscape beckons with barns to build, gardens to grow and trees to plant while continuing research in the Mansion will guide the way to further restoration. But, let us take a moment to reflect on what an amazing 85 years it has been and celebrate all that has been accomplished. Happy 85th anniversary, Gore Place Society! Thank you to all the wonderful friends of Gore Place over the years! We salute you!

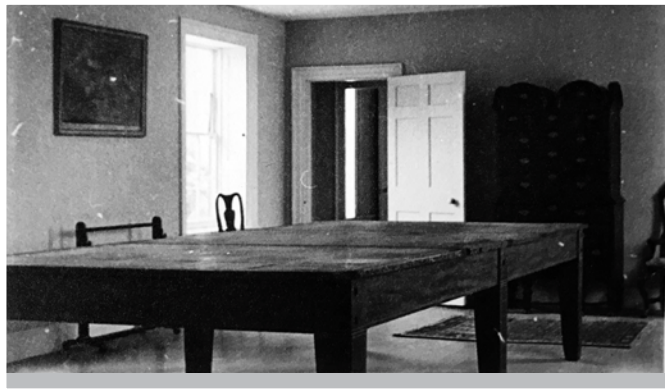
By Thom Roach, Director of Programs and Interpretation, Gore Place.

ENDNOTES

1. Hosmer, 203.
2. Hosmer, 204.
3. In his printed appeal to the membership of SPNEA, Appleton argues, the possible loss of the Mansion would be a calamity “on a national scale.” Hosmer, 204–205.
4. Hosmer, 206.

REFERENCES

- Hosmer, Jr., Dr. Charles. *Preservation Comes of Age: From Williamsburg to the National Trust, 1926–1949, Volume I*. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1981.
- “Reports of the Board of Governors of Gore Place Society.” Archives of Gore Place Society, 1935–1945.
- Mission and Leadership. Historic New England, 2020. www.historicnewengland.org/about-us/mission-leadership/.



All photos on this page from the Archives of Gore Place Society.

The Gore billiard table was one of the first objects acquired for the collection. Here it is in 1937 not quite fully assembled, without its rails, pockets and baize.



The original Gore-era Birds of Paradise wallpaper was revealed in 1942, after the Dining Parlor's fireplace surround and mantel were removed.

85 Years of Preservation of a Fine Collection

In 1935, the Gore Mansion was empty. How could the Mansion look its best without beautiful furnishings? A fine collection was needed. So once again, the founders turned to their friends for help and what treasures they found!

The first executive director of Gore Place was Helen Bowditch Long Patterson (1881–1956), the daughter of Harry Vinton Long (1850–1949). Harry was the director of museums for the Society of the Preservation of New England Antiquities (now known as Historic New England) by 1920, a mere 10 years after it was founded by William Sumner Appleton. Since many of the new Governors of Gore Place and their friends were also members of other preservation societies, Mrs. Patterson asked them to gather appropriate furnishings. Some items came as gifts, such as early Boston brass andirons, a pantry box with Gore carved into its top and the Gore billiard table.

Other early furnishings were loans, a large group through Mrs. Patterson's sister, Susan Higginson Nash. Eventually some were converted to gifts and others were returned to their owners. The portrait of the "Two Daughters of John Gore," attributed to John Singleton Copley (1738–1815) and possibly painted in 1753–1755, was first loaned to Gore Place in 1945 by two descendants of Francis Gore Crafts (1743–1788), one of the sitters. There are notes in the files that mention a portrait of the "Gore children" hanging in the family home on Chestnut Street, Boston. In December 1984, the descendants of Thomas Crafts Jr. and Frances Gore gave the portrait to Gore Place.

The story of how the Gore phaeton finally came to Gore Place is interesting. According to records, the "State House Barouche" was sold to a wealthy Bostonian for \$50 in 1910. The vehicle was then gifted to the Shirley Eustis House in 1914 from the estate of J. Chancellor

Crafts of Boston and put in storage there. The story goes on, "The Gore Place Society now has an appropriate place to put the coach on exhibition in the Gore barn in Waltham and, thought that was the proper place for it... since Gore Place Society was not yet on as firm a foundation as it would be later, if things work out under the able management of Mrs. F. Gordon Patterson, which appears likely, it seems wise to have the coach under the care of the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities (SPNEA) for the present." The title to the coach was given to SPNEA and loaned to Gore Place on February 20, 1939. Finally, the phaeton was purchased by Gore Place Society in 1984 for \$1.

The founders knew that Gore Place deserved a collection that would reflect the furnishings of the "country seat" of Christopher and Rebecca Gore. Wouldn't they be pleased to know how important their efforts were and how firm a foundation we have built?



A steam shovel helped clean up debris after the Great New England Hurricane of 1938.



A load of hay arrived at the Carriage House in 1936.

Gore Place Welcomes Bequest

Gore Place was thrilled recently to learn of the bequest made by long-term member Debbie Gates to Gore Place confirming her legacy as a member of the Christopher and Rebecca Gore Society. Debbie was president of the Board of Governors of Gore Place from 2003 to 2011 and has a commitment to the ongoing restoration that led her to put Gore Place in her will.

Asked when she first came to Gore Place, she said: "In 1996 a friend of my parents asked me to help do crafts for the Holiday Party. That's when I met Susan Robertson who told me the history of this country estate. I had an MA in history, and the whole process of restoring the Federal property was appealing to me, as well as the conundrum of how to pay for it. I thought this was a classic old school Boston non-profit that needed more money and new energy."

Currently an active member of several Board committees, she has great aspirations for Gore Place's future: "My hope is to capture the imagination of people who care about preservation. If we could restore the gardens and grounds, we could become a real destination for those interested in American design and history."

The importance of planned giving at Gore Place cannot be underestimated. If you have made a planned gift or wish to know more, please contact Diana Roberts (Dina) at (781) 894-2798 or dianaroberts@goreplace.org. The Christopher and Rebecca Gore Society welcomes all who make a planned gift to sustain Gore Place for a long and enduring future.



Peter and Debbie Gates in the West Entry of the Gore Mansion at *A December Evening* 2019.

Farming Continues at Gore Place

Sheep at Gore Place are not a 20th century addition. The *Journal of Jacob Farwell* from the Gore Place collection reports that the Gores enjoyed eating lamb. By 1935, sheep had long disappeared from the estate. They were reintroduced in July 1982 when two Merino ewes were purchased from Sturbridge Village to start a flock at Gore Place. These ewes were named Lady Caroline Lamb and Miss Agnes Dee. In 1983, Lady Caroline and Miss Agnes gave birth to the first two lambs born on the estate in many years. By 1984, lamb was offered for sale at Gore Place.

In 1987, Waltham school children came to see shearing on the estate for the first time. The following year, the public was invited on April 23, 1988 to see our sheep shorn and watch one spinner and one weaver demonstrate fiber arts. This was a quiet start for what would grow into the Sheepshearing Festival at Gore Place, a New England spring tradition ongoing since 1987.

Our flock is now a handsome group of registered Leicester Longwool sheep developed through innovative breeding techniques by Robert Bakewell in the late 18th c. in England. Christopher Gore wrote about visiting the Bakewell Farm so it is entirely possible that his *Farm at Waltham* included this "new" breed. Today, Gore Place is one of three farms in Massachusetts out of a total of 77 farms in the US to support this rare breed. Sheep are a great addition to the estate. During this 85th anniversary year, we will begin to raise the funds to build a proper early 19th c. style barn for better housing and closer viewing. Sheep have returned to Gore Place to stay!



The flock of Leicester Longwool sheep enjoy the pastures at Gore Place.

Photo credit: Eric Workman | TMP Images

A DECEMBER EVENING 2019



Richard and Carole Wolfe



Geoffrey and Electa Tritsch



Carron Haight, Esq. and Susan Roche



Diane and Robert Nicholls and Nancy Place



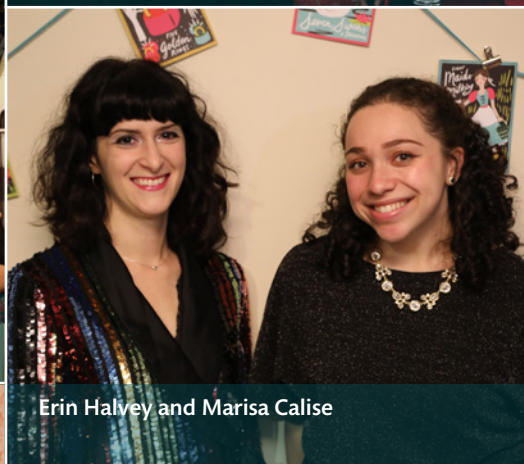
Tom Thaler, Charlotte Patten, Stephanie Warburg and Jane Marshall



Tory Cabot, Vicky Cabot, Bill Gallagher, Zachary Hallack and Susan Hunnewell



Susan and Douglas Harding, Tom Thaler and Toddy Mason



Erin Halvey and Marisa Calise



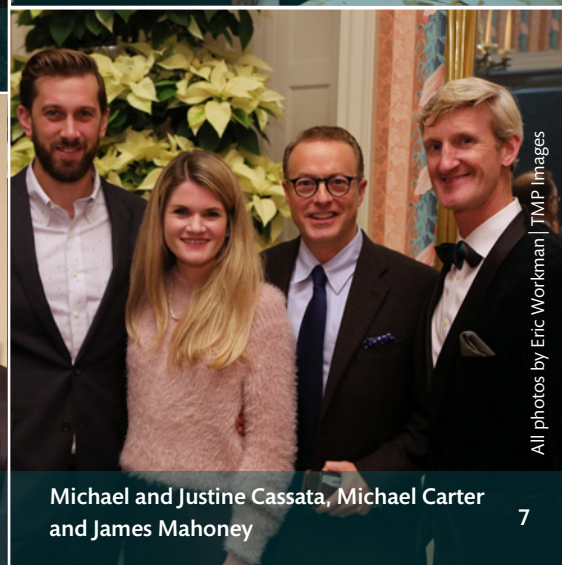
Emily Robertson, Raysa Ortiz, Marie Chow and Hollis Plimpton



Susan Robertson, Jennifer Morss Drayton and Grace Caner Offen



Tiffany and Randy LeBlanc



Michael and Justine Cassata, Michael Carter and James Mahoney

We need your help now more than ever!

*Please donate to our Annual Fund
at goreplace.org/support.*

Our Annual Fund provides critical support for the day-to-day expenses that keep our beloved museum running.

Your donation will:

- Provide buses for elementary school children to visit Gore Place
- Offer socialization through watercolor classes for elderly adults
- Teach our youngest visitors at Tot Time on the Farm
- Feed our rare breed of sheep
- Encourage interpretive research to better tell our stories

Donate online at goreplace.org



Robison Imagery

The view looking east over the spectacular Gore estate, fall 2018.



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