Welcome Home, Uncle Theo!

By Thom Roach, Director of Interpretation and Programs

Recently, Gore Place received a gift of a portrait of Theophilus Wheeler Walker (1813-1890), painted in 1851 by the American artist Joseph Alexander Ames (1816-1872).* It was offered to Gore Place by a Walker descendant who was happy to have “Uncle Theo”—as the family affectionately refers to him—return home. The longest private owner of the Gore estate, Walker owned the property during most of the second half of the 19th century. An important acquisition, Walker’s portrait fills in a missing piece of the house’s history and will be displayed at Gore Place alongside a painting of Walker’s ship Danvers, already in our collection.

Theophilus Wheeler Walker was born in 1813 in a district of Danvers, today Peabody, Massachusetts. He was the second of nine children born to the Reverend Samuel Walker (1779-1826) and Sophia Wheeler Walker (1782-1831). Theophilus was just 13 when his father died. At 16 Theophilus traveled south to the port of Boston, where he took a job as a clerk with a hardware merchant. There young Walker learned about importing and distributing goods, knowledge that would serve him well.

Walker would not be clerking long. At 18 he heard of a failed hardware business. He could buy its old stock at a deep discount if he could raise the capital. He must have impressed potential backers, for he soon had enough credit to buy the goods and open a firm. He retired the debt in a few years and brought his younger brother Nathaniel into the business. They called their company Walker and Brother.

According to historian Jeremy Hagger, “Salem and Danvers were centers of the tanning industry in Massachusetts. One of the byproducts of tanning was used in the making of glue. Walker and Brother began as agents for the Essex Glue Company but soon were part owners of the operation, keen to expand the business.”

Wherever the Walkers found an opportunity, they jumped in. During Walker’s time, Boston became a major seaport. Shipbuilding was booming all along the Northeastern Seaboard. Seeing opportunity in owning the means of transporting the goods they sold, Walker and Brother became principal owners of the ship Sophia Walker, named for their mother, and later the Danvers (see the sidebar article, The Ships Sophia Walker and Danvers).

In the mid-19th century, ships out of Boston traveled throughout the Americas, to China and beyond, trading in such things as porcelain, fabric and spices. Travel by sea came with great risks. Severe weather and miscalculations damaged or sank hundreds of ships. Pirates and privateers preyed on vessels carrying fortunes in goods and gold.

Travel to the East meant months at sea. Merchants and shipowners risked fortunes on the success or failure of each voyage. Investors were willing to underwrite that risk for rates from 3 to 20 percent of the assessed value. In 18th-century England, men gathered in a coffee shop to accept unlimited liability by underwriting a voyage in hopes of realizing great profit. That coffee shop would grow into the insurance giant Lloyds of London. In post-revolutionary Boston, Rebecca Gore’s father, Edward Payne, opened an insurance office. By the 1780s he had “most of the business of the town.”

Many investors owned interests in ships without ever boarding them. Not Theophilus Walker. He experienced the dangers of maritime travel first-hand.

*J.A. Ames was a well-respected artist of his time and painted portraits of Daniel Webster, Rufus Choate and Abraham Lincoln, among others. As a young man, Daniel Webster clerked in the law office of Christopher Gore.
Letter from our Board President

Dear Friends of Gore Place,

In this issue of *The Agrarian*, you will read about Theophilus Wheeler Walker who rose from modest beginnings to become a driving force in New England manufacturing during the 19th century. You will learn that it was his love of the classical design of the Gore house that preserved the building for more than half of the 19th century. We are fortunate that he was one of so many who have appreciated this historic house over the years and that there are more and more who continue to do so.

You will also read in the Noteworthy section of this *Agrarian* that, in spite of the ongoing pandemic concerns, our staff continues to excel in their creativity and resourcefulness. Happily we have had the financial strength to retain them during the pandemic. They have reimagined how we can use our many resources to improve the quality of life in our community and surrounding towns; their efforts have met with great success.

I especially want to call attention to our *Raise the Barn* campaign. We plan to re-create an authentic agricultural setting with barns and paddocks near the 1835 farmer’s cottage. This is the third part of our strategic vision to improve management of our rare sheep and provide a more authentic experience for our many visitors. Do think about joining me in supporting this important campaign and we can all look forward to a festive barn raising!

I will close with my continuing sentiment: I encourage you to join me in spreading the word far and wide about this marvelous historic estate! Remember, we’re humble enough to say we honestly can use your help; we genuinely appreciate it.

Sincerely,

Thomas Thaler

Donor Recognition Plaques Recently Installed in the Carriage House

Visitors to the Carriage House will see the donor recognition plaques that have been installed just inside the entrance. These plaques list all donors who gave $5,000 or more to any of Gore Place’s three capital campaigns to date. These generous donors have made possible urgent repairs and restoration in the Gore Mansion and Carriage House. Gore Place is pleased to recognize this wonderful group of supporters. Many of them have given to all three campaigns, which is a strong testament to their commitment to what we do. In the words of Board member and past campaign chair Debbie Gates, “Gore Place is grateful to our wonderful supporters, and we want to thank them. Preserving history is important work, and their generosity makes it happen.”

Debbie Gates, Tom Thaler and Susan Robertson by the plaques.
Electa and Geoff Tritsch Join Christopher and Rebecca Gore Legacy Society

The Christopher and Rebecca Gore Legacy Society, formed to recognize supporters who have made planned gifts to Gore Place, has its newest members: Electa and Geoff Tritsch. Electa first became interested in Gore Place when she was a graduate student at Boston University. She is the past executive director of a number of nonprofit organizations and currently consults part-time. Ten years ago, she joined the Board of Governors of Gore Place as a representative of the Trustees of Reservations. She is a member of the Program and Interpretation Committee and the Building and Grounds Committee.

Geoff originally joined Gore Place as a “Board spouse,” but soon found his own interest in the Sheephearing Festival and in assisting Gore Place in the area of telecommunications because of his expertise as a career technology consultant in higher education.

Electa and Geoff, who live in Concord, are engaged in the challenges of being newly retired. Asked why they have made a bequest to Gore Place at this time, Electa is adamant: “We have taken care of the future of our kids. Now I want to ensure the future of this place I love. I am concerned about making sure people will be able to see this landscape in the future the way we do today.”

Asked about her proudest accomplishment on the Board, Electa said: “I worked hard to enmesh recognition of the Gore landscape with the appreciation of its buildings. Today we convey we are welcoming visitors to a country estate, not just a fancy house.”

Gore Place is most grateful for planned gifts generously made by donors like Electa and Geoff who wish to preserve and protect the future of this historic estate. If you have made a planned gift, or wish to do so, please contact Diana Roberts (Dina) at 617-875-2670 or at dianaroberts@goreplace.org.

ANNUAL FUND CAMPAIGN UPDATE

Announcing the $30,000 Giving Challenge!

Help our Annual Fund receive a $30,000 match donated by a generous anonymous donor. What a wonderful gift to Gore Place! The donor will match dollar for dollar up to $30,000 of gifts during the month of April, through May 1, 2021. This match will give us a boost toward our goal of $206,000!

The Annual Fund Supports

• Day-to-day operations
• Our dedicated staff
• Historical collections
• Care of our farm and animals

MANY WAYS TO DONATE TO THE ANNUAL FUND

Website | Online at goreplace.org
Mobile | Text GORE to 44-321
Mail | Gore Place Society 52 Gore Street Waltham, MA 02453
Stock Gifts | Contact Diana Roberts at dianaroberts@goreplace.org
Theophilus was onboard the Sophia Walker when she ran aground off the coast of New York City in the winter of 1845. A first-hand account of the voyage, entitled Sophia Walker, was offered by Captain John Codman junior in the July 1880 Harper’s New Monthly Magazine. It was the third of January. Codman says a severe winter storm forced the Sophia Walker broadside onto a sandy beach. The passengers and crew endured a rough night huddled below deck, waiting for the storm to pass. To reduce strain on the ship, Codman ordered the crew to cut away her spars. In the morning the passengers, Walker among them, were so eager to get off the ship they would not wait for the first boat to “run a line ashore” to assist in the rescue of passengers and crew but insisted on getting in, only to capsize in the rolling waters. In the end, spectators from shore pulled these passengers from the surf onto the beach. Codman recalls that when referring to the fiasco, Walker would joke, “winter yachting and winter surf-bathing (are) exciting but unseasonable amusements.”

According to the Republican Journal of Belfast, Maine, dated 27 August 1847, Walker’s ship Danvers launched from the yard of J. Pierce & Co., in Belfast, on August 26. The entry describes her as “430 ton, double-deck owned by Messrs. Walker & Brother, and Captain Samuel Gore, of Boston (emphasis ours), and to be commanded by Captain Gore.” Was this Captain Samuel Gore connected to Christopher Gore’s family? (See sidebar Captain Samuel Gore). We know Walker already had a connection to the Gores through his brother’s marriage to Susan Seaver Grant, the daughter of Mary and Moses Grant. Mary was the daughter of Christopher’s brother Samuel.

Walker’s ships sailed to South America and Asia and played roles in the Mexican-American War and the California Gold Rush, but Walker saw that money could be made with less risk. He and Nathaniel partnered with Salem merchant and shipowner David Pingree, investing in land and mills in Maine. In 1846, Theophilus Walker bought Pingree’s disused tannery in Vassalboro, Maine, and converted the land into the North Vassalboro Woollen Manufacturing Company. It would become the largest woolen mill in New England, employing over 500 workers.

By 1855, Theophilus Walker was a wealthy man. He was 42 and had been pursuing his career for a quarter-century. That year, he purchased the estate of Christopher and Rebecca Gore from John Singleton Copley Greene. Gore had built the house in 1806 and winterized it in 1816, the year his political career came to an end. Walker had long admired the house and told friends he would someday live there. Now Walker had a home in the country.

Walker’s nieces Mary Sophia and Harriet Sarah Walker came to live with their uncle following the death of their mother in 1861. Walker and his nieces made few changes to the mansion. They preserved the Gore era wallpapers and set-up the Oval Room and Great Hall as galleries for their extensive classical art collection.

Theophilus never married. Despite being described in his youth as “a foremost figure in the social life of Boston,” in later life, Walker was a private man and did not take part in large social functions. He maintained lifelong friendships though, and was close to his brother Nathaniel, five years his junior.

Walker also remained close with his cousin Leonard Woods, Jr. (1807-1878). When, in 1839, Woods became the fourth president of Bowdoin College in Brunswick, Maine, he enlisted his cousin Theophilus to finance the building of a new chapel for the College. Walker agreed to help, provided the plans included space for an art gallery in honor of his mother who had been an art collector. But when it was completed, Walker was not satisfied with the results.

When Nathaniel Walker died one day after Christmas, 1885, Theophilus lost a brother, a friend and a partner. Theophilus Wheeler Walker died five years later. He was 77. He left everything to his nieces Harriet and Mary Sophia, including the grounds and buildings at Gore Place. The sisters hired Charles Follen McKim of McKim, Mead, and White to design a building to house Bowdoin College’s art collection. Completed in 1894, the building is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Harriet and Mary Sophia dedicated The Walker Art Building to their uncle Theophilus.

Although they were born a half-century apart, we can draw interesting parallels between the lives of Theophilus Walker and Christopher Gore. Both came from large families. Neither man came from great wealth—Walker’s father was a minister, Gore’s was a carriage painter and shopkeeper—yet both Walker and Gore made a fortune. Both men suffered the loss of their father at an early age and could not expect an inheritance.

Walker’s father died when he was just 13 years old. As a Loyalist during the American Revolution, Gore’s father was forced into exile when Christopher was just 15. Though Walker lacked the formal education Gore received at Harvard, he came from an educated family (his father graduated from Dartmouth College). Walker learned his trade at an early age and was working independently by the age of 18. Gore left his apprenticeship before he turned 20 and built a thriving law practice by the age of 25.
Both men sought opportunities to build their fortune; Gore in bonds, bridges, canals and mills; Walker in importing, manufacturing and shipping. Gore was 48 years old when he built the house Walker would purchase fifty years later at 42. Walker would continue the horticultural tradition that Gore had begun, regularly entering his produce in competition at the local agricultural fair, and consistently winning prizes for his apples and pears.

Both Gore and Walker were interested in classical art and architecture and shared an appreciation of one of America's most outstanding classical homes. Gore's legacy includes a monument to learning: the library at Harvard. Walker's legacy includes a monument to the arts: the Walker Art Building at Bowdoin College.

Leading citizens of their times, Walker and Gore remain little-known figures today.

We wish to thank Jeremy Hagger of Waltham for sharing his interest and knowledge about Theophilus Walker. He believes that Walker deserves greater recognition.

**SOURCES**

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Phillips Library, David Pingree (1795-1863) Papers, 1803-1939

Gleason, Hall. Old Ships and Shipbuilding Days of Medford 1630-1873, Medford Historical Society, West Medford, Massachusetts, 1936


Whitmore, W. H. Genealogy of the Families of Payne and Gore, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, 1875


The Ships Sophia Walker and Danvers

Theophillus Wheeler Walker was co-owner of two ships, the Sophia Walker and the Danvers.

Built in 1844 in Medford, Massachusetts, the Sophia Walker was, according to Captain John Codman Junior, a "lucky ship." Codman wrote about his time skippering the ship in an 1880 article in Harper’s New Monthly Magazine. In 1845, while harbored in Port Louis, Mauritius, he accepted a shipment of pepper from Captain Winn of the Caroline Augusta, promising to deliver it to Salem, Massachusetts, for a “handsome sum.”

In the archives of the Phillips Library in Rowley, Massachusetts is a bill of lading for the Sophia Walker. It states Codman will deliver 126,000 pounds of pepper to David Pingree in Salem, for the charge of $2,047, around $71,000 in today’s dollars.

The Sophia Walker’s career lasted 12 years. It ended on March 29, 1856 while on a trip transporting goods by sea was dangerous business. Walker’s other ship, the Danvers, was not long for it. Built in Boston, Maine, the Danvers launched on 26 of August 1847. The Republican Journal described her as: “strong in every part as art can make her.” Despite her strength, the Danvers met an unfortunate end. On 14 July 1848, the Republican Journal wrote, “Capt. Elliott, crew of ship DANVERS, of Boston... arrived at New Orleans 24th but Capt E. states that he left the ship on the 22d, buried 7 feet in the sand, with 6 feet of water around her and 6 feet in the hold.” Less than one year from her launch, the Journal reported: “the hull of the ship DANVERS was sold on the 20th for $290.”


Thom Roach, Director of Interpretation and Programs

## Captain Samuel Gore

In 1847, an article in the Belfast, Maine Republican Journal listed Captain Samuel Gore of Boston as captain and co-owner of the merchant ship Danvers. Christopher Gore had a grandnephew named Samuel Gore. Was Christopher’s grandnephew the Captain Samuel Gore of Boston cited in the paper? We searched the records for clues.

According to the Gore family genealogy, George Gore (son of Christopher’s brother Samuel) and his wife Mary Brown had two children, Samuel and Susan. Samuel married Lucy P. Child of Augusta, Maine on 17 June 1843.

The 1865 Massachusetts census lists Samuel Gore as being 47 and wife Lucy as age 42. However, five years later the census has Samuel Gore age 61, and Lucy 50. The latter census is closer to the information found in the family genealogy, which says Samuel was born in 1807 and Lucy in 1819. Both censuses list Samuel’s occupation as either Retired Sea Captain or Mariner.

The best evidence that Christopher’s grandnephew co-owner and skipper of the Danvers was circumstantial but compelling. In Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society, Volume 13 (1835-1875) the author describes George Gore, son of Christopher’s brother Samuel, as “father of Capt. Samuel Gore” and continues to say, “I am indebted to Mrs. Susan (Grant) Walker for much information in regard to the later generations of the family.” An earlier version of the same genealogy made no mention of the title Capt. when referencing Samuel Gore. Did Nathaniel Walker’s wife Susan make that critical distinction in the later version?

Whether or not he co-owned the Danvers, the 1890 will of Christopher’s grandnephew Samuel Gore tells us he lived into his 80s and retired with his wife to Europe, a wealthy man.
**NOTEWORTHY**

**Join Us Outdoors!**
Weekly guided outdoor tours
Book Sale in May
Plant Sale online orders begin mid April
And space for your private events!

Noteworthy is usually a small section with news about Gore Place. While we are closed for regular tours during the pandemic, our Board, staff and volunteers have produced many accomplishments for Gore Place, so we devote an entire page to these highlights!

**Program Updates**

**New Outdoor Programs** | When Gore Place Society was founded in 1935, the Articles of Organization included in the statement of purpose “…to use the property of the Corporation for literary, educational, benevolent, charitable or scientific purposes…” Prompted by the need to present outdoor programs during Covid-19, we are pleased to report the success of our new astronomy programs, outdoor tours of the agrarian landscape and specialized nature tours. We think that Christopher Gore would approve. Helen Pinkney, in her book *Christopher Gore*, relates that while Gore was at Harvard, he joined a Speaking Club but his speeches were more literary and scientific than political. His first one was on astronomy!

**Collaboration with the MA Dept of Ed Coordinated Family and Community Engagement** | The Coordinated Family and Community Engagement (CFCE) initiative at the Watertown Public Schools, assisted by our education specialist Marisa Calise, is now collaborating on two programs at Gore Place: a weekly family outdoor workshop at our nature playscape and assistance with the illustrated books on our Story Trail. Story Trail books change monthly and have bilingual translations and take-home STEAM crafts that align with curriculum standards. CFCE is a MA Dept of Early Education and Care program that offers locally-based programs to provide child development services and resources to families with young children.

**Our Success with Small Programs** | Small programs at Gore Place continue to be a success story. Small programs include concerts, Tot Times, Jane Austen teas and lectures, outdoor tours, Sips and Stories wine tastings, Poe dramatization, Stargazing, snowshoe rentals, Santa teas, holiday photos and more. Individually, these programs earn modest revenue amounts. But collectively, they generate a significant and sustained revenue stream and foster our reputation as a lively, engaging museum. At these programs, attendance has increased more than 20% and revenue has increased more than 15% as compared to last year.

**Staff Updates**

**Staff Presentation at NEMA Conference** | Gore Place staff and consultants facilitated a session on website accessibility at the fall 2020 New England Museum Association conference. Participants included our volunteer coordinator Aaron Rawley, marketing manager Emily Robertson, website developer Emily Carpenter of Tunnel 7 and executive director Susan Robertson. The presentation also featured Charles Baldwin, Mass Cultural Council program officer for the Universal Participation (UP) Initiative. Gore Place is an UP designated organization.

**Susan Robertson Receives Lifetime Achievement Award** | Gore Place executive director Susan Robertson received the 2020 Lifetime Achievement Award at the New England Museum Association (NEMA) annual conference in November. This award is given to one person each year who has built a distinguished career in the museum field. Susan has served as Gore Place’s executive director for more than 25 years. She has led the museum’s day-to-day-operations and multiple major capital campaigns that have both preserved Gore Place and transformed it into a world-class historic property. She is a past president of NEMA’s board of directors and continues to share her knowledge with fellow museum professionals on topics such as governance, museum ethics and historic site management. This award carries great significance to all of us at Gore Place. Congratulations, Susan!

Many new lambs were born on the Farm this season!
Operations Updates

2021 Sheepshearing Festival Canceled | Everyone at Gore Place is very sorry to share the news that, after many discussions, we have decided not to hold the Sheepshearing Festival in 2021. We feel that there is still too much uncertainty about public health with the coronavirus pandemic to be able to successfully and safely hold the Festival this year. While the loss of the Festival a second year in a row is disappointing and means a financial challenge for the museum and its many vendors, the well-being of all involved is our highest priority. The Sheepshearing Festival has taken place in April every year since 1987. We thank our loyal community of visitors, friends, members, trustees, staff, volunteers, as well as the many artisans, historical reenactors, vendors, performers and sponsors who make the Sheepshearing Festival such a success. We look forward to being back with you next year on Saturday, April 23, 2022.

Gore Place Receives PPP Loans | Gore Place received a second Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loan from the US Small Business Administration as part of the CARES Act. We are pleased to report that the first PPP loan was forgiven. Because of this funding, along with continuing support from our donors and members and sound financial strategy from our Finance Committee, Gore Place has been able to retain all staff during the pandemic.

New Online Shop | Check out our new online shop at goreplace.org/shop. It has been completely redesigned, with all products sold under one shop roof, easier check-out processes, and shipping and curbside pick-up options. In addition to our signature wool, ties and tea towels along with special gifts and local honey, we have added a section for books and collectibles! We are looking for donations of any vintage. If you are tackling spring cleaning, please consider donating to our shop. We will gratefully research and set the prices on your items. To donate, contact Thom Roach at events@goreplace.org.

Annual Used Book Sale | We want your used books! Donate to our Annual Used Book Sale, in the Century Tent at Gore Place in May. Check our website for dates. To donate, contact Thom at (781) 894-2798 or email him at events@goreplace.org.

Winter Camp | Highland Street Foundation chose Gore Place to participate in Winter Camp 2021 during February school vacation. This special week-long event, hosted by Highland Street and supported by New England Patriots Foundation, provided free educational and cultural field trip experiences for children and families. Gore Place offered free outdoor tours all week.

$10,000 Grant from Foundation for Metrowest | Gore Place received a $10,000 grant from Foundation for Metrowest for interpretation of the agrarian landscape. This grant will enable the museum to create new outdoor visitor experiences to tell the story of the Gores’ “Farm at Waltham,” including outdoor interpretive panels and a free audio tour for mobile devices. The content was planned and written by a Gore Place task force led by Susan Robertson that included Miriam Boucher, Marisa Calise, Scott Clarke, Michael Dudal, Lorna Keith, Thom Roach, Aaron Rawley, and Electa Tritsch. We will work with independent exhibit developer Jan Crocker on evaluation of the project. Jan has many years of experience in exhibit evaluation and accessibility. Her previous positions have included exhibit project management at the Museum of Science, Boston, Heritage Museums and Gardens and the E. M. Kennedy Institute.

During the pandemic, Gore Place shifted from hosting large private events to beautiful, small weddings and other gatherings.

Photo courtesy of Caroline Winn Photography

Sweet orange bell pepper transplants growing in the greenhouse for the Plant Sale.
RAISE THE BARN AT GORE PLACE

Help Us Build Gore Place History

Gore Place is embarking on a two-year campaign to improve its working farm and bring a 19th century agrarian experience to its visitors. This campaign will restore the historical agricultural heritage of the Gores and provide visitors with authentic educational experiences.

This Project’s Three Main Areas

FARM BUILDINGS AND OPERATIONS
- 1½ story threshing barn and a pole barn
- Additional pasture land and a new farmyard

NEW VISITOR EXPERIENCES
- New outdoor exhibits
- Space to see the animals up close

MODERN PUBLIC AMENITIES
- Accessible pathways and restrooms
- New gathering spaces for visitors

To learn more and review a project site plan, visit us at goreplace.org.