**The Gore Roll of Arms**
**by**
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It has been said that one of the differences between Europeans and Americans is that Europeans think that a hundred kilometers is a long way, while Americans think that a hundred years is a long time.  With this difference in mind, as an American I would like to introduce to you a <u>very</u> "old" roll of arms.

**Introduction**

The Gore Roll of Arms is the earliest known American roll of arms, depicting mostly in color 99 coats of arms dating to the early Eighteenth Century.

Though the dates given with the arms run from 1701 to 1724, the watermark of the paper used for the Roll has been dated to around 1731.[1]  From this, and from a variance from a strict chronological sequence of the arms,[2] the Gore Roll would appear to be a mid- to late-Eighteenth Century compilation from earlier sources.  we cannot know for certain whether the arms are from a workbook, looseleaf designs and notes, or other descriptions.[3]

**The Roll's Physical Composition**

Physically, the Gore Roll is in the form of a book, bound in full parchment.  The pages measure 12½ inches by 7⅞ inches (approximately 32 cm by 20 cm).  They bear the watermarks of the well-known papermaker Honig from Zaandyk in The Netherlands.[4] (It was also Honig that made the paper on which broadsides of the American Declaration of Independence were printed and distributed in July 1776.)  The first page of the Gore Roll is a fly leaf, with are drawings of the arms on both sides of the next thirteen leaves, painted four to a page.  The remaining leaves of the book are blank.[5]

The first 84 coats are fully colored and appear to be by a single artist of some skill.  This supposition is supported by a comparison of the handwriting of the legends accompanying most of the arms contained in the Roll.  The remaining fifteen arms are by one or more other artists, less skillfully rendered, are not colored for the most part, and where colors <u>are</u> used, they tend to be muddy (for example, *azure* appearing as more of a light blue-grey).

The majority of the arms are accompanied by an inscription beneath them describing the individual to whom the arms are supposed to belong.  The Roll gives, in most cases, the name of the individual (both given and surname), a notation of the person's status or rank (wife, merchant, Esq., Captain of Marines, etc.), and a date, which often coincides with the date of death of the individual.  Inscriptions accompanying the later arms tend to be either the name (or sometimes just the surname) of the individual or that old standby, "By the Name of" *Whoever*, which can also be found on many of the heraldic embroideries of the time.

**Authorship**

The primary author of the roll is believed to be John Gore (1718-1796), a Boston carpet and coach painter who is known to have also adapted and designed coats of arms.[6] Advertisements for his services have been found in Boston newspapers from 1751 to 1769.[7] John's second son, Samuel Gore (1750/1-1831), was a pattern drawer and had a shop at the "Sign of the Painter's Arms" on Queen Street in Boston.[8] Samuel's second son, Christopher, was known to have worked with his father about 1807.[9] It is possible that Samuel and/or Christopher may have contributed some of the later arms drawn in the Roll.

The Gores (John and Samuel) provided patterns for what was then a fashion of decorating the houses of the well-to-do in Boston with embroidered coats of arms done by schoolgirls who were finishing their education in Boston.[10] One such girl, Elizabeth Cutts, mentions this source for patterns by name in a letter to her father in 1783:

> *I have been to get the Coat of Arms prepared for working, and Mr. Gore shewed me two Arms by the name Cutts, the one belonging to a Family from London, and the other from Chelsey, both Arms different; and Papa as you chuse I should work your Arms, I should be fond of making no mistake & of working the right, if your business permitted your letting me know by name the right one, it would be sufficient, without further trouble, as my utmost abilities shall be exerted to please Mama & yourself sir in the working.*[11]

Indeed, the Gores were a source for such patterns from about 1750 until at least 1796,[12] and some sixty coats of arms have been identified in the style of pattern produced by them.[13]

**Sources of the Arms in the Gore Roll**

The arms found in the Gore Roll seem to have come from three sources. Two are mentioned specifically in a letter book by John Gore for November 20, 1773 as "the old manuscript and Guillium".[14] The "old manuscript" is presumably the *Promptuarium armorum*, authored by William Smith, Rouge Dragon Pursuivant, produced between 1602 and 1616,[15] and which contained some 4,500 painted coats of arms.[16] Smith apparently brought it with him when he came to America, and it is known to have been in the possession of several Boston painters before being acquired by the Gores.[17] *Guillium* is, of course, John Guillim's *A Display of Heraldrie*, the seventh edition of which had been published in a folio printing in 1724.

The other source for some of the arms in the Gore Roll is a manuscript pedigree on parchment of the Chute family, brought to America about 1635 by the immigrant, Lionel Chute to Ipswich, Massachusetts. In addition to the pedigree dating back to the time of Edward I, it contains the arms of the Chute family and impalements with nine other families.[18] These heraldic entries appear in the Gore Roll.[19]

**History of the Gore Roll**

The Gore Roll has had a somewhat checkered history. In about 1847, Isaac Child made a copy of the Roll. The Child copy contains a number of errors (*e.g.*, substituting *gules and argent* for *gules and azure* in one of the Hutchinson arms, though they are the correct *gules and azure* in a later one, and left unfinished [as *gules and (blank)*] in a third).[20] Child's copy of the Gore Roll was acquired by the New England Historic Genealogical Society shortly after his death in 1885.

In August and September 1865, genealogist and antiquarian William H. Whitmore published a blazon version of Child's copy of the Gore Roll in a short-lived American periodical, *The Heraldic Journal*. He noted at the time that the original Roll was "inaccessible",[21] and wrote a short time later that "[t]he original manuscript has disappeared within a few years."[22] Whitmore also published a partial copy of the Gore Roll in his book *The Elements of Heraldry* in 1866, which was reprinted in 1958. This partial version contained the arms of New Englanders only.

These publications by Whitmore of the Gore Roll contain many errors differing from the Child copy (for example, in the Taye arms, Whitmore changes the eagle's head crest in the Gore Roll and the Child copy to a "cormorant's head").[23] In some cases, there are errors in the Child copy and additional ones in the Whitmore publication, creating a compounded level of inaccuracies. Let us take, for example, the arms of Tailer. In the Gore Roll they are *Per saltire Argent and Or a two-headed eagle displayed Gules*. In the Child copy, the field is given as *Gules and Or* and the eagle as *Argent*.[24] Whitmore blazons the field as *Or and Gules* (the reverse of Child) and the eagle, which is not blazoned as being two-headed, is left untinctured.[25]

Nearly one-half of the arms found in the Gore Roll also appear in J.B. Rietstap's *Armorial Général*, published in 1884 and reprinted in 1965, 1972, and 1988. In most cases, the spellings of the names and the blazons of the arms from the Roll found in Rietstap follow the spellings of the names and blazons of the arms (and therefore the errors in them) as published by Whitmore. For example, Whitmore gives the arms of Calewell as those of George Caldwell and blazons the first quarter of the arms as: *Per pale crenellé gules and argent, three bear's paws erased*, and gives the crest as *a hand gauntleted, holding a bear's paw erased*. These same arms appear in the Supplément to Rietstap's *Armorial Général*[26] (and again in Rolland and Rolland's illustrations of the *Armorial Général*),[27] as "**Caldwell** – *Boston*. Parti-crénnelé de gu[eules]. et d'arg[ent]., à trois pattes d'ours arr[achées]. de sa[ble]. **C.:** une main gantelée tenant un patte d'ours." In other words, the name, arms and crest as given in the description by Whitmore, not as they actually appear in the Gore Roll, with the field entirely gules, with lion's jambes fesswise in pale and argent (rather than two and one, and sable), and with a lion's jambe gules in the crest.
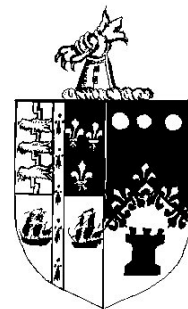
In 1891, and reprinted in 1964, Edgar de Valcourt-Vermont's *America Heraldica*, republished Whitmore's 1865 description of the Gore Roll. In 1929, Howard M. Chapin published *A Roll of the Arms Used in the English Colony of Rhode Island in New England, 1636-1776*, in which he based the arms of individuals found in the Gore Roll on Isaac Child's copy.[28]

In the early 1930s, Dr. Harold Bowditch of the Committee on Heraldry of the New England Historic Genealogical Society rediscovered the Gore Roll held by relatives of the Gore family, and acquired it from them for the NEHGS. He published his examination of the original Gore Roll, comparing it to both the Child copy and Whitmore's description, between 1936 and 1938 in *The Rhode Island Register*, a quarterly publication of the Rhode Island Historical Society. Dr. Bowditch's review of the Gore Roll was also published in 1983 in *Genealogies of Rhode Island Families from Rhode Island Periodicals* by Robert and Catherine Barnes.[29]

Finally, in 2002 the NEHGS published in the on-line *Atavus* magazine a brief article on the Gore Roll,[30] and has in late 2003 published pictures of the arms in the Gore Roll on its website,[31] making them available to Research Members of the NEHGS.

The overall effect of all these various publications, however, since most of them are based on the Child copy or Whitmore's publications, is that much of the information to be commonly found about the Gore Roll is rife with errors. Indeed, the most erroneous information is located in the most widely available and least costly publications, while the most accurate information is in much more rare or expensive sources.

**The Arms**

With all that as background, whose arms are contained in the Gore Roll? Many of the individuals whose arms are found in the Roll are persons of importance in colonial New England. There are listed three governors (of three different colonies) as well as two Lieutenant Governors; a Secretary of the Province of Massachusetts Bay; a Commissary General of the Province; seven Justices of various levels; two judges; an Attorney General; a Collector of Customs; twelve Councilmen of the Province; a baron; a baronet; four knights; one lady; six esquires not otherwise described by office or rank; from the military (including both regular forces and colonial militia) a major general, eight colonels, four captains, one lieutenant, and a man described only as a "naval officer"; and of other professions, a doctor and nine merchants. This does not include the wives and widows of many of these individuals who are also included in the Roll.

This is not, however, to suggest that everyone in the Roll would be considered of the upper or politically influential classes. The occupations given of two of the individuals in the Gore Roll are those of a shipwright and a painter. There are also many whose occupations are not given at all and who are given no title of any kind, making the Gore Roll somewhat of a cross-section of the people of Boston in the 18th Century.

We come now to the question of the legitimacy of the arms depicted in the Gore Roll. Is the Gore Roll a piece of authentic armorial heritage? Or were the Gores running the 18th Century equivalent of a "bucket shop", selling "your family coat of arms" to anyone who would pay them?

Indeed, they are accused of just that by Joseph Wolf, Head of the Division of Historical Genealogy of The Newberry Library, Chicago, Illinois, in an on-line article on heraldry. Mr. Wolf says: "At the close of the 17th century, th[e] illegal use of arms was helped along by an obliging carriage painter of Boston named Gore, who created arms and eventually made a roll of arms which is completely without authority."[32] And as heraldry author William Berry noted more generally in

1810, "Every coach, house, and sign painter pretends to a knowledge of the science of heraldry, rather than lose the job when offered."[33]



So, let us examine the evidence surrounding the arms contained in the Gore Roll. At least some of the arms appearing in the Roll seem to have been in lawful use, often through several generations of a family. For example, Gorden Saltonstall, whose arms are shown here impaled with his wife, Mary Whittingham, is a descendant of Samuel Saltonstall, brother of Sir Richard Saltonstall, Lord Mayor of London in 1597.[34] These arms are on record with the College of Arms in London as those of this family,[35] and were used by the Lord Mayor, Sir Richard, on his seal.[36]



The arms of Sir William Pepperell, shown here with the augmentation he received, as well as a baronetcy, for his part in capturing Cape Breton in 1745, were inherited from his father. When his father died in 1733, Sir William wrote a letter to procure a marble tombstone, in which he requested: "I would have his Coat of arms cut on it, which is three pine apples proper, but you will find it in yᵉ Herald's Office, it being an Ancient Arms."[37] The arms of Sir William Pepperell were also borne by his grandson, who was created a baronet in 1774.[38]
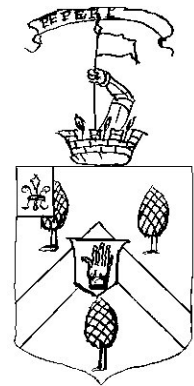


Other arms appear to have been assumed by the families involved. For example, there are three Hutchinsons who have arms in the Gore roll: Elisha Hutchinson (son of Edward Hutchinson); Eliakim Hutchinson (cousin of Edward Hutchinson); and William Hutchinson, son of Eliakim. The Hutchinsons of New England are descended from the Hutchinsons of Alford in the County of Lincoln.[39] William Whitmore, writing in 1866, says that the arms "were probably assumed, without due warranty".[40] Indeed, when a cousin of the immigrant presented his pedigree and claimed arms in 1634, the claim was "respited for proof" by the heralds of the English College of Arms.[41] Despite this, and despite the fact that no connection has been found between the Hutchinsons of New England and the Yorkshire family whose arms they used, the Hutchinsons of New England used the arms extensively. This includes not only the Hutchinsons appearing in the Gore Roll, but extends even to Thomas Hutchinson, the Governor of Massachusetts from 1769-1774.[42] The arms appear on seals [43] and on tombstones [44] used by and for members of the family.



Finally, there are examples of arms which appear to have been adapted by the Gores to their clients. Capt. Henry Crofts, illegitimate son of James Crofts, the Duke of Monmouth (himself an acknowledged but illegitimate son of King Charles II)[45] is given the arms of the Crofts of Cheshire.[46] But the Crofts of Cheshire are unrelated to Baron Crofts of Saxham, with whom the Duke of Monmouth was placed in his youth.[47] Capt. Henry Crofts died in December 1702; it may be assumed that for a son, even illegitimate, of the late Duke of Monmouth, some sort of armorial display would have been wanted, and not knowing the Captain's arms (indeed, it is unlikely that he had the right to any), the arms of another family of the same surname were pressed into service, with the appropriate cadency mark for a second son.
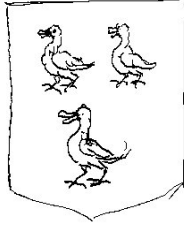
In another instance, the Gore Roll depicts the arms of Scolly. There is record of a Benjamin Scolly, born about 1698, who married Susanna Bradshaw in 1730 in Boston, Massachusetts.[48] No arms have been found for this name. However, both Burke and Papworth note *Azure three swans argent* for the name "Scholar". It may be assumed that the Gores, not finding any arms for Scolly, used the arms of the similar-sounding surname Scholar for their client.

**Conclusion**

So ... the Gore Roll: authentic armorial heritage or 18th Century bucket shop? The answer would appear to be "yes" to both. The Gore Roll is, to a certain extent, a contemporary record of arms as they were being used at the time by many of the individuals and families named, whether legitimately granted (as we have reason to conclude in some cases) or assumed by the bearers (as we believe in others). We find these individuals and their descendants or predecessors using the same arms over generations in exactly the places one would expect to find legitimate arms being used at the time: seals, engraved silver, armorial portraits, tombstones.

But we also find arms which appear to have only the most superficial relationship to the named individuals, sometimes on the basis of similar sounding surnames; for example, a variant of the arms of Bourghdan or Burowden, given in Papworth as *Argent, three cinquefoils sable*,[49] being attributed in the Gore Roll to Mary Borden Brinley as her paternal coat of arms.

For all of its faults, however, the Gore Roll holds a place in heraldic history, however recent that may be in European terms, as the earliest known American roll of arms, and as a legacy of and memorial to the people of the Province and Colony of Massachusetts Bay, New England, in Eighteenth Century America.

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# Endnotes

1. Bowditch, 1936, p. 14.
2. Bowditch, 1936, p. 20
3. *See, e.g.*, Bowditch, 1936, p. 18
4. Bowditch, 1936, p. 14
5. Bowditch, 1936, pp. 14-15
6. Bowditch, 1936, p. 18
7. Chase, p. 572
8. Ring, p. 626; Chase, p. 577
9. Chase, p. 577; Bowditch, 1936, p. 19
10. Ring, p. 622
11. Ring, p. 626
12. Ring, p. 626
13. Ring, p. 626
14. Ring, p. 626
15. Bowditch, 1936, p. 11
16. Ring, p. 626
17. Bowditch, 1936, p. 11
18. Whitmore, "Pedigree of Chute, or Chewte", p. 144
19. Bowditch, 1936, p. 11
20. Chapin, p. 27
21. Whitmore, "The Gore Roll of Arms", p. 113
22. Whitmore, *The Elements of Heraldry*, p. 80
23. Whitmore, "The Gore Roll of Arms", p. 116; Bowditch, 1936, p. 26
24. Bowditch, 1936 p. 92
25. Whitmore, "The Gore Roll of Arms", p. 122
26. Rietstap, vol. II, p. 1216
27. Rolland, Vol. II, Pl. VII
28. Chapin, p. 27
29. Barnes, pp. 707–815
30. Simons
31. www.newenglandancestors.org
32. Wolf, http://www.digiserve.com/heraldry/harticle.htm
33. Berry, p. 135
34. Whitmore, "The Saltonstall Family", pp. 161-162
35. Bowditch, 1938, p. 94; Barnes, p. 812
36. Whitmore, "The Saltonstall Family", p. 164
37. Whitmore, "Heraldic Notes and Queries", p. 88
38. Whitmore, "Baronets of New England", p. 183
39. Bowditch 1936, p. 128
40. Whitmore, "Suffolk Wills", p. 183
41. Whitmore, "The Hutchinson Family", p. 171
42. Zieber, p. 34
43. Whitmore, "Suffolk Wills", p. 183
44. Whitmore, "Monumental Inscriptions", pp. 83-84; Zieber, p. 57
45. Burke Dormant, p. 478
46. Burke, p. 245
47. Bowditch 1936, p. 23
48. Scolly
49. Papworth, p. 871.  Bourghdan, Burowden, Burgedon, Burghdon, Bruweton