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Carriage House at Waltham's Gore Place gets new home

Christopher and Rebecca Gore married in 1785. An up-and-coming Boston couple, they bought their first piece of land in Waltham and in 1793 built a wooden mansion along with a large carriage house. Six years later, the mansion burned to the ground. Nearly 220 years later, the Carriage House still stands, but is on the move.

The 40-by-70-foot, two-story Carriage House sat in the northwest corner of the 45-acre parcel of land at 52 Gore St., known as Gore Place. But this week, construction crews were picking it up and moving it about 350 feet south.

"We wanted to move it to a more historically accurate location," said director of public programs Thom Roach, adding that there is currently an issue of spring drainage in the basement, which is something "people in New England will understand."

Until the late 1960s, the House stood in the southwest section of the grounds, but the city moved it so Gore Street could be widened to accommodate the high volume of cars coming from and going to Raytheon.

The House, because of the street, cannot be returned to its previous location, but Roach said they've shot to get it as close as possible and already laid the new foundation.

Starting Monday, construction crews were working to lift the building up onto long steel beams using large hydraulic jacks. Nate Newton, assistant project manager with Pittsfield-based Allegrone Construction, said Tuesday that extensive planning went into the move.

After the steel beams are placed beneath the building and its weight is equally distributed across the support, Newton says the jacks slowly lift the building up, which is then supported by "shoring towers."

The piece-by-piece towers are put together with smaller wooden beams and are described by Newton as giant Jenga sets.

Tuesday morning the crews had raised the house about two feet off the foundation and Newton said they would bring it up to about six feet. It was then to be placed on rollers that go on a steel track – similar to large train tracks – and rolled to the new location, about 350 feet away. Crews were shooting to finish the move by Friday.



Workers with Geddes Building Movers on Tuesday prepare to move Gore Place's Carriage House to another location on the property. Wicked Local staff photo / Kate Flock

"Everything has gone pretty well so far," Newton said Tuesday. He's been working on the project for about eight weeks and will build an addition to the Carriage House after the move.

The new construction will require the removal of a portion of the wall, but given the historic value of the material, Newton says it'll be reused.

"Incorporating the stuff we're removing is important to the Gore Place and for these types of projects," Newton said.

The Carriage House was used – in Christopher and Rebecca Gore's time – for their horses and many carriages. It also acted as quarters for the mounts of Boston elite who would come west to Waltham for parties and social events. Notable guests included President James Monroe and Massachusetts Sen. Daniel Webster.

The project costs about \$2.1 million and is being funded through the Massachusetts Cultural Facilities Fund and Waltham Community Preservation Act funds.

The Gore Place grounds are open daily to the public and tours of the Gore Mansion are available six days a week.

The Carriage House is one of many attractions offered at the Waltham estate some call "The Monticello of the North."

"This is one of the very last late 18th-century carriage houses that hasn't been repurposed into something else," Roach said.

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