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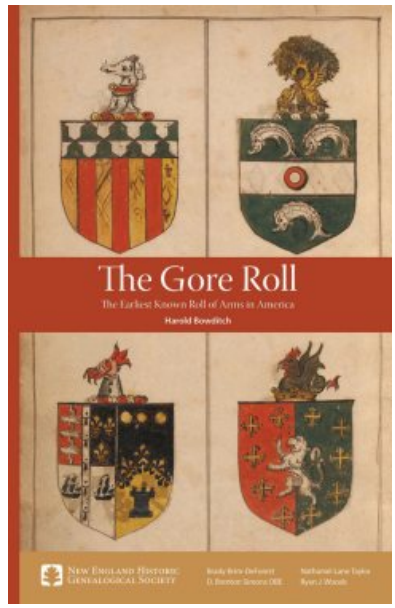
BOOK REVIEWS



Harold Bowditch, *The Gore Roll: The Earliest Known Roll of Arms in America*. Palfrey Press, 2024. xx+324 pp, full-colour and a few black and white illustrations throughout. Hardcover ISBN 978-0-88082-435-4. US$59.95 at https://shop.americanancestors.org/products/the-gore-roll.

This large (8”x12.75”, 20.5x32 cm) hardcover book is one that has been anxiously awaited, certainly by American heraldry enthusiasts, since it was first brought up as an adjunct for the then- announced 36th International Congress of Genealogical and Heraldic Sciences to be held in Boston, Massachusetts, in September 2024. The Congress was hosted by the New England Historic Genealogical Society (NEHGS), the current owner of the original Gore Roll, a copy of the Gore Roll made by sign painter Isaac Child in the mid-1800s, and a copy of the Child copy of the Gore Roll made by Dr. Harold Bowditch of the Committee on Heraldry of the NEHGS in 1926. All three of these manuscripts are included in this full-size colour facsimile reproduction volume.

The Gore Roll is the work of John Gore (1718–1796) and his son Samuel (1750/1–1831), coach painters in colonial Boston, Massachusetts. Another son, Christopher Gore (1758–1827), was later Governor of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, 1809–1810, and United States Senator for the Commonwealth, 1813–1816. The family itself has a somewhat interesting history, and was split during the American Revolution; John Gore was a Loyalist who left Boston when the city was evacuated by British forces in March 1776 (he returned to Boston some years later), while son Christopher was involved in anti-British activities before the American Revolution and after graduation from college served in the Continental Army 1776–1778.

The bulk of this book is broken up into four sections:

The first is a full-colour facsimile of the Gore Roll of Arms, the earliest known roll of arms in America. The facsimile pages of the Gore Roll are accompanied by Dr. Harold Bowditch's text originally published in the journal of the Rhode Island Historical Society, *The Rhode Island Register*, in 1938, shortly after Dr. Bowditch had rediscovered the original Gore Roll in the possession of a descendant of the Gore family. The coats of arms in this section are also accompanied where appropriate by artwork from *The Book of Coates and Creasts: The Promptuarium Armorum*, a roll of some 4,500 coats of arms created between 1602 and 1616 by William Smith, Rouge Dragon Pursuivant of the College of Arms in London, which was brought to America by one of his successors in office, William Crowne, and which was later known to be in the possession of John Gore.

The second section is a facsimile of Isaac Child's copy of the Gore Roll of Arms, which is more fully entitled *Extracts from Various Authors Concerning the Science of Heraldry, transcribed by I. Child*, and of which his copy of the Gore Roll takes up only a portion. The remaining portions of this section are a handwritten copy of the fourth edition of *The Irish Compendium or, Rudiments of Honour* and a *Supplement*, printed in London in 1745, as well as handwritten extracts from a peerage and from a dictionary of technical heraldic terms, followed by handwritten copies of pages from *The Heraldic Journal*, published in Boston in the 1860s.

The third section is a facsimile copy of Dr. Bowditch's 1926 (and thus before the rediscovery of the original Gore Roll) *The Gore Roll of Arms: A Copy of the Only Known Copy of a Lost Original*, wherein he copies the arms of the Gore Roll from the Child Copy along with his own notes of other places (*e.g.*, Burke's *General Armory*) where he has found those arms, including their blazons.

Finally, in the fourth section, the Appendix, we have Dr. Bowditch's "Early Water-Color Paintings of New England Coats of Arms" from *Publications of The Colonial Society of Massachusetts*, Volume XXXV, Transactions 1942-1946.

As you can see, there is a lot to find in this volume. Is it as complete as it might be? Are there other things that could have been included that would make it an even more comprehensive work?

While Dr. Bowditch speaks in his introduction about the publication by William H. Whitmore in 1865 of the blazons and text contained in the Child copy along with his own biographical notes, and remarks that there are differences between the Child copy and Whitmore's text, one must go elsewhere (*e.g., The Heraldic Journal* of 1865, a pdf copy of which can be found on-line at Google Books) to see what Whitmore wrote about it and to compare the differences between what is seen in the Child copy and what Whitmore wrote for a blazon. In my opinion, including Whitmore's text and notes would have made for a more complete history of the Gore Roll in a single volume.

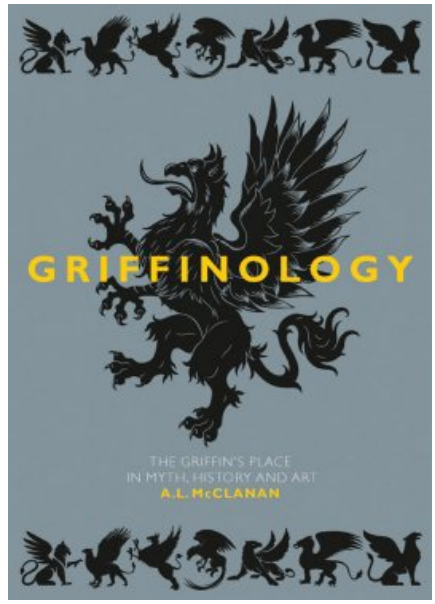
Further, in and around Boston, Massachusetts, there are a number of old (and some newer) grave markers and headstones which depict one or another of the coats of arms found in the Gore Roll. For example, the Joshua Winslow arms which appear as number 91 in the Gore Roll are also seen on the table tomb of Josiah Winslow (1623–1680) in Marshfield, Massachusetts, and on the table tomb of John Winslow (1597–1674) in King's Chapel Burying Ground in Boston. It would have been nice if photographs of these examples of the use of relevant coats of arms contained in the Gore Roll had been included in this volume.

Finally, there is neither an armorial (though the arms can be searched by surname in the Index in the back of the volume) nor an ordinary of the arms in the Gore Roll, but I suspect that for most this is a very small quibble, as the relatively small number of arms

(roughly 100) is not too onerous to search through.

Naturally, all of these possible shortcomings pale in comparison to the ability to own a volume which contains full-size, full-colour facsimiles of these historic American heraldic manuscripts, along with the detailed research and bibliographical notes by Dr. Harold Bowditch on the arms and the individuals contained therein. If you have any interest at all in American (or really British, since Massachusetts was a British colony at the time) heraldry as it was used in the early and mid-eighteenth century, then this volume should be on your "must have" list to own.

David B. Appleton



A.L. McClanan, *Griffinology: the griffin's place in myth, history and art*.
London: Reaktion Books, 2024. 224 pages, 109 illustrations.
Hardcover ISBN 978-1-78914-846-6. £30. Ebook ISBN 978-1-78914-886-2. £25.

The griffin is a familiar fabulous beast, not least through its presence in heraldry, with an ancient and complex history and iconography. This attractively produced and lavishly illustrated volume is a thorough exploration of the origins and evolution of the griffin, up to its present-day appearance in commercial branding, gaming, and modern fantasy literature.

Depictions of griffins first appear in the applied arts of the Bronze Age cities of Iran/Mesopotamia and spread throughout ancient west Asia. They are common on cylinder seals and take various forms: a lion's body with the head of an eagle; a 'griffin demon' (a standing anthropomorphic figure with the wings and head of an eagle); and the Anzû Bird (a lion-headed eagle). Professor McClanan's approach here is inclusive – if a beast has been called a griffin, then it is likely to be present in this book.

'Orientalising' griffins spread from the Middle East to Classical Greece where