

Recasting the Gore name in Colorado



This plaque on Gore Pass details the exploits of the landmark's namesake

By Jeff Mitton

Route 134 runs west from Kremmling toward the Flat Tops Wilderness, winding up and over the Gore Range at Gore Pass. Five miles to the south, the Colorado River carved the deep and narrow Gore Canyon through the Gore Range.

On the crest of Gore Pass a brass plaque mounted on a granite boulder begrudgingly honors the man for whom the range, pass, and canyon were named.

It is inscribed: "Here in 1855 crossed Sir St. George Gore, an Irish Baronet bent on slaughter of game and guided by Jim Bridger. For three years, he scoured Colorado, Montana and Wyoming accompanied usually by forty men, many carts, wagons, hounds and unexampled camp luxuries. More than 2,000 buffalo, 1,600 elk and deer, 100 bears were massacred for sport."

Lord St. George Gore traveled in luxury. His entourage included a valet, an expert at tying flies, a dog-handler, 20 greyhounds and foxhounds, 40 men, 100 horses, 20 yoke of oxen and four conestoga wagons, each pulled by six mules. His arsenal included more than a dozen shotguns, 75 rifles and many pistols. Each day he rested in a large tent after his men assembled his brass bed, bath tub and commode with a fur-lined seat and removable chamber pot. He sat on a proper chair, ate at an iron table set with pewterware and read from his library in the evening while sipping fine wine.

During the day, Lord Gore would establish a shooting station, and six or eight men would stand with him to tend to his needs. The other men and the dogs would go far afield to drive game toward Lord Gore's shooting station. An

assistant would hand Lord Gore a loaded rifle, Gore would fire, hand the spent rifle to another assistant, then take another loaded rifle.

The plaque mentions that the buffalo, elk, deer and bear were massacred for sport, but nothing in Lord Gore's activities fits my definition of sport. He shot to drive up the count and to harvest the skulls, which he took home. He killed for personal aggrandizement, for bragging rights.

The 1850s were a different time. But even in those days, Lord Gore's massacre was so excessive that both Native Americans and the U.S. Cavalry objected and asked him to stop. He ignored the pleas, but the Cavalry took no action. In those days, rich men got away with murder.

We have honored Lord St. George Gore's unbridled killing spree by naming a mountain range, a pass and a canyon after him. Perhaps the naming made sense more than 100 years ago, but it is a shameful anachronism today. We need to change the names.

People become comfortable with names and generally oppose name changes for places that are meaningful to them. I share this inertia for place names.

We could retain the names, but change the meaning by honoring someone else.

I propose that the Gore Range, Gore Pass, and Gore Canyon be reinterpreted to honor an environmentalist who was awarded a Nobel Peace Prize for his efforts to heighten the public's awareness of climate change: Al Gore.

All we have to do is to mount a new plaque on the granite boulder on Gore Pass.

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