

Tally Ho!

historic dover

By Gil Rodgers, Norfolk Hunt Club member

The Amelia Peabody Memorial Hunt Shares a Slice of Dover History



Adrienne Iorio on Rhubarb guides her sons Aiden on Popsicle and Taylor on Sassy through the Hurricane Alley jumps in Noanet Woodlands; Photo credit: Ruthworks Photography.

On a sunny crisp Saturday in late November, the annual Amelia Peabody Memorial Foxhunt took place at historic Powisset Farm. The “drag” foxhunt (no live foxes participate) brought together the Norfolk Hunt Club – with 40 horses and riders and 16 foxhounds – and 200 members of the Dover community to celebrate a time-honored sporting tradition at the farm once owned by Amelia Peabody. The event is named in honor of one of Dover’s most famous historical figures, whose charitable acts and generous spirit benefit Dover residents in perpetuity.

Who was Amelia Peabody?

One of the first visual markers for drivers crossing the Charles River from Needham into Dover is the historic millstone with “Amelia Peabody” chiseled across the top. Born in 1890 as the only living child of Frank and Gertrude Peabody, whose family business was the banking and investment firm Kidder, Peabody & Company, Amelia Peabody was a woman of great accomplishments, vision, reputation, and generosity. As the sole surviving offspring to inherit family wealth, “Miss Peabody” owned homes in Boston, Marblehead, and Dover. She never married and transferred much of her substantial estate to charities. Her home in Dover was Mill Farm, on Dedham Street, where she died in 1984 at age 94.

Amelia Peabody was known for her diverse interests. She was a renowned sculptress who worked out of her solar studio at Mill Farm, studied with prominent artists of the day, and exhibited in leading galleries. In 1948, her interest in solar energy prompted her to build one of the world’s first solar-powered houses, located at Powisset Farm.

A Commitment to Agriculture, Open Space, and Equestrian Pursuits

As an avid equestrian and one of the first female members of the Norfolk Hunt Club, Amelia Peabody rode to hounds and jumped fences sidesaddle with the Club for thirty years. She was keenly interested in maintaining open space, farming, agricultural science, and animal husbandry. She showed in competitions her white-faced Hereford cattle and Yorkshire pigs bred and raised at Powisset Farm; her prizewinning livestock delighted breeders who visited from all over the world. Miss Peabody bred, raised, and trained Thoroughbred racehorses at Mill Farm, where she also kept her hunting and driving horses. The Amelia Peabody Pavilion at the Tufts Cummings School of Veterinary Science in Grafton,



Christine Sullivan, of Dover, serves cookies to riders at the stirrup cup (break) at Powisset Farm.

MA, was dedicated in 1981 in her honor for education and research on livestock and livestock diseases.

Miss Peabody valued the importance of protecting the environment and natural resources and appreciated open space and nature as land for learning and passive recreation. She owned the extensive forests, streams, ponds, dams, and open areas of Noanet Woodlands, which effectively connected Mill Farm with Powisset Farm. To transverse by foot, horse, carriage, or horse-drawn sled between the two farmlands, Miss Peabody cut a wide pathway that remains a trail today and was recently used at the Amelia Peabody Memorial Hunt. It was especially important to Miss Peabody to maintain her vast properties so they could be easily accessible by foot, skis, or horseback and enjoyed by the public. The properties were beautifully maintained; extensive bridle trails were built to access new vistas and restore damage from storms. After the devastating New England Hurricane of 1938, when buildings, homes, and woods were damaged or destroyed, Miss Peabody quickly and cleverly cleared trail and built the Hurricane Alley of jumps out of downed trees in Noanet Woodlands, so walkers, equestrians, and the Norfolk Hunt Club could continue their sport. Hurricane Alley continues to be a popular trail feature today.



A young spectator enjoyed the attention from the Norfolk foxhounds.



Norfolk Huntsman and Dover resident Steve Ferrin lets junior riders guide the hounds home; Photo: Ruthworks Photography.

At Mill Farm, one of Miss Peabody’s greatest pleasures was watching young and adult equestrians jumping ponies and horses through “The Gallery” of multiple hurdles, ditches, ‘in-and-outs,’ banks, and water features at the farm. A competitive rider in her own right, Miss Peabody confidently jumped high stone walls and fences and was active in the Norfolk Hunt Horse Show, where, for over 35 years, she personally awarded the Mill Farm Trophy (sponsored by her friends) to the winner of the show’s Champion Hunter.

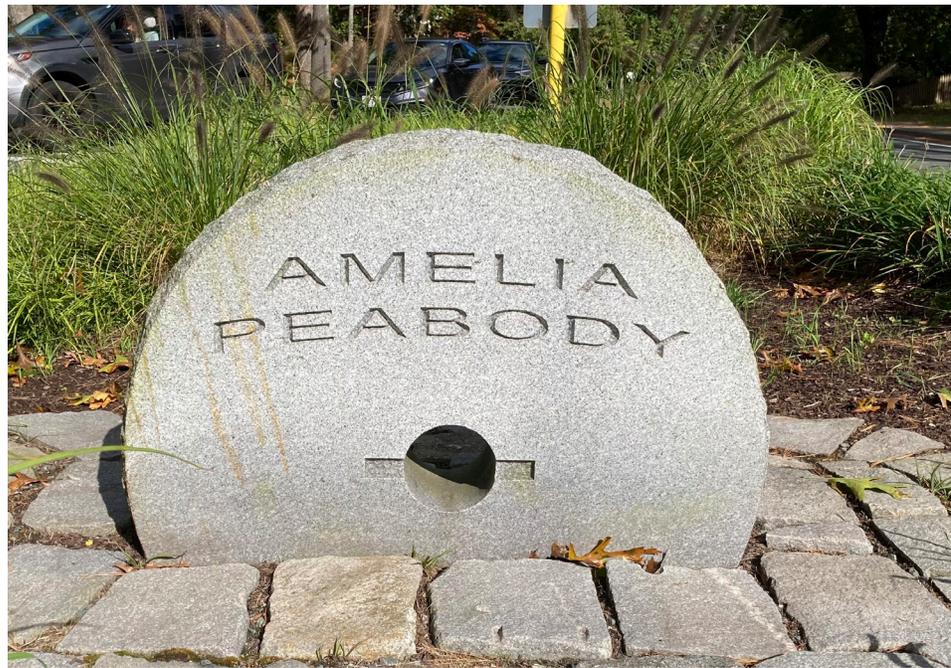
A Dover Legacy for All

Amelia Peabody is remembered for her inclusive, kind, and generous nature. The 800-acre Dover





Miss Peabody jumps a fence sidesaddle at the Norfolk Hunt Horseshow, circa 1920s; Photo: David Lewis Jr.



Millstone at entrance to Dover; Photo: Gil Rodgers

estate – including Noanet Woodlands and Powisset Farm – was transferred by gift and purchase to The Trustees for agricultural activity and passive recreation. Mill Farm is privately owned; much of the land is held in a conservation restriction. The Amelia Peabody Charitable Trust and Amelia Peabody Foundation provide grants for causes including medicine, social welfare, visual arts, historic preservation, land conservation, and learning experiences for disadvantaged young people.

Sources: Based on discussions with George Lewis, Rennie Clark Roberts (ex-MFH), Lil Cabot Minot, Robert Mcleod, Mary Crane (Ex- MFH,) and Adeline, Carl, and Richard Wilcox (Edgar Wilcox – father, was livestock manager at Powisset Farm.). Document and photograph research at the Massachusetts Historical Society (MHS), Boston; The Trustees Archives & Research Center (ARC), Sharon, MA; Amelia Peabody Charitable Fund; and The Norfolk Hunt: One Hundred Years of Sport, David W. Lewis, Jr. (Ex -MFH), 1995.)



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