

Frederick Forrest Peabody

Several generations of Santa Barbara High School students have cheered their teams as they ran up impressive scores or lost sadly in the Peabody Stadium, the gift of one of the dedicated men in the cause of Santa Barbara.

Frederick Forrest Peabody was born in 1859 in Northfield, in the upper central portion of Vermont. His first employment was teaching school until 1876 when he switched to a clerical position in the Chicago salesroom of Coon & Van Volkenberg, a collar and cuff manufacturer of Troy, New York. Within four years, Peabody became a partner in the firm which, in 1889, joined George B. Cluett's establishment to become Cluett, Coon & Co. Again Peabody was a partner, and when the Coon brothers retired in 1896, the new partnership was called Cluett, Peabody & Co. Five years later, the partnership was replaced by a corporation of the same name, and F. F. Peabody continued as vice president. From 1907 to 1917, Peabody was president of the firm, then chairman for two years after which time he severed all business connections.

The principal products of the company were shirts, collars, and cuffs manufactured in several plants under the familiar trade name of Arrow Shirts. The company was successful; in 1909 a melon was cut with a 300% stock dividend and other companies were acquired. On the other hand, there were difficult times such as 1921-22 when no dividends were paid for two years. A contribution to the firm's renewed prosperity came with the development and licensing of its Sanforizing process.

F. F. Peabody married Sarah Blanche Griffith,

the daughter of a clergyman, in 1882, and established their home in Albany, New York where the family grew with the addition of four daughters and one son. Peabody was a director of several banks and the Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute.

The Peabodys had learned about the beauties of Santa Barbara as the result of an earlier visit, and returned in January 1906 for the winter season. They signed the Potter Hotel register just a few weeks after his associate, George Cluett, had concluded his Santa Barbara vacation. This time the visit was but a prelude to longer range plans for permanent residence, and Peabody looked around for prospective homesites. Riding horseback along the eastern fringes of the city, he found a great, unencumbered hill in the Ashley tract. Within a week after his arrival, Peabody purchased 40 acres on Eucalyptus Hill from Frank M. Gallaher which was quickly followed by another 20 acres from the same seller.

Peabody engaged Charles F. Eaton, landscape architect, to develop the grounds as a step in developing the property when suddenly he was called to Evanston, Illinois, because of one daughter's illness. This unexpected event, in effect, almost entirely suspended Peabody's attention to the property and only minimal work was accomplished. Peter Riedel, hired to carry out the landscape work, built a fine driveway on the property; at the same time Peabody joined his neighbors to share in the cost of badly needed restoration of Eucalyptus Hill Road.

Peabody's interest in the property was not entirely dormant; in 1910 he arranged for more trees for his estate. Though there were many oak

trees on the site, 7,000 eucalyptus trees were added which were raised in small pots. After 15 years, these seedlings stood 50 to 70 feet tall.

Another step toward residence was the construction of a cottage on the estate for his recently divorced daughter, Rachael P. Frazier, who was once described as the "prominent and clever daughter" by a society reporter. (Her former father-in-law had been a partner of W. H. Bartlett of Middle Road.)

In February 1913, Frederick and Sarah Peabody returned to Santa Barbara, their first visit in seven years. They stayed in their daughter's house while she was in Europe. Francis Underhill had been busy drawing plans for the Peabody house. Measuring 150 by 110 feet, it was to be built around a court where an impressive oak stood in its center. The Peabodys returned to the East with the house really under way; in April 1913, a city building permit was issued for the \$50,000 house and the garage costing another \$3,000. The con-

tract was issued to J. C. F. Miller, and it was hoped that he would have the house ready in the fall of the next year.

In February 1914 the Peabodys rented *Gardenholme*, the Paul Harvey house on Coast Highway near Miramar Avenue. When they arrived in Montecito they found that Peter Riedel was busy moving mature trees to the new hilltop home. From Dr. Brown's old place on lower State Street, Riedel secured orange trees, a tall palm and a giant rubber tree, said to weigh 20 tons.

As the house was approaching completion, the matter of an appropriate name was discussed. Should it be a New England or Spanish name? Finally, *Solana* was chosen, the Spanish word for "sunny place."

The house was ready in early January 1915 and the Peabodys moved in a few weeks later. That year they spent several months in Santa Barbara and entertained graciously. One evening they invited 150 people to hear Lorraine Wyman of

From a hill to the northwest, this photograph was made shortly after Solano was completed in 1915. The entrance on Eucalyptus Hill Road, just beyond the right edge of the picture, winds past the Roman columns on its way to the front entrance. The house on the left was built for Peabody's daughter.

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Los Angeles give a vocal concert at the Santa Barbara Country Club and stay on for dinner and dancing.

As 1917 began, Peabody purchased another 17 acres from Gallaher along the southern edge of his property to bring his holdings to 79 acres. At that time, *Solana* was bounded on the south by Alston Road, on the northwest by Eucalyptus Hill Road, and on the east by Knapp's *Arcady* and part of Camino Viejo.

Life in Santa Barbara

The Peabodys continued to visit Santa Barbara from time to time, but Frederick was not destined to live there until 1919. In 1917, just before the War began, the Peabodys scheduled a large dinner-dance at *Solana* for their daughter Ruth, but when the nation suddenly entered the War, they cancelled the party. Instead, Ruth entertained her friends at the Knapp's Sandyland beach house (A year later, she married David Fleming of Harrisburg, Pennsylvania).

During World War I, Peabody was actively engaged in field work, contributing both time and personal funds for a field hospital unit and a base hospital at Bordeaux, France. About that time Peabody happened to visit the Naval recruiting office in Los Angeles and observed that the hard-working crew was hampered by crowded conditions. When one secretary remarked that they lacked sufficient filing space, Peabody asked if the government would provide more only to be told that there were no funds available. He countered with: "Tell your commanding officer to get what he needs and send me the bill" and handed the lady his card. The files were purchased, the work moved expeditiously and, of course, Peabody paid the bill.

There was a change in Peabody's personal life when his marriage ended in 1918 and he received the final decree in October 1919. At that time, King Albert of Belgium was visiting in Montecito, and no one could be more surprised than Peabody when the king, unexpected and unannounced, walked over to *Solana* and had tea with him.

Frederick F. Peabody and Kathleen Burke were married in April 1920 in the presence of her old friend, Mrs. O. D. Norton, her mother, and William R. Edwardes. Their honeymoon was spent on the 4,500-acre Eagle Canyon Ranch near Paso Robles which Peabody had purchased the year previously.

Kathleen Burke, born in England and educated

at Oxford, was in the United States when the War began in 1914. Hurrying to England, she took an active part in the evacuation of refugees from Belgium. As honorary secretary of the Scottish Women's Hospitals, she traveled to Serbia, Greece, and Russia. In 1916, she returned to America for successful fund-raising campaigns for hospitals and the Red Cross; because of her extensive activities, she was known as the "Angel of France" and was reported to be the most decorated woman in the world. In March 1917, while on a lecture circuit, she was a guest of Mrs. Norton and returned to Santa Barbara several times after that.

From 1920 until his death in 1927, Peabody lived in Santa Barbara and devoted his great ability to help the community. He gave his attention (and money) to many organizations, such as the Cottage Hospital, the public library, and the new Lobero Theater. Although "retired," he agreed to serve as chairman of the Santa Barbara Board of



Frederick Forest Peabody (1859-1927).

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Through the columns a hill can be seen with its harvested hay. This hill later became the location of the Cowles' residence. To the right of the colonnade, graders are carving a road in the hillside to the site of Mrs. Bothin's teahouse.

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Education at the time the new high school and the Roosevelt School were under construction. As the high school was nearing completion, the community expressed to the school board its disappointment that there were no funds for an athletic field. Peabody heard the wails and quietly remarked that perhaps he might be able to raise the funds if the facility could be built under a private contract. With this accepted, Peabody raised the money quickly (and most effectively) by writing a personal check for \$100,000.

When the Peabody Stadium was opened on Thanksgiving Day of 1924, great crowds gathered to applaud the quiet and retiring benefactor after he had made a short presentation speech.

Peabody also participated in a citizens' group which purchased beach-front property in 1924 to hold in trust until the city had the available funds. All these activities were taking a toll, and with less than robust health, Frederick and Kathleen Peabody decided to take a trip to Europe in June 1925. The day before their scheduled sailing from New York news of the Santa Barbara earthquake flashed across the wires. Their reaction was not unexpected; the trip was cancelled and they rushed back to help the stricken community. On their return, they found their own house badly damaged but Peabody accepted the chairmanship of the Santa Barbara Relief Fund Committee. Naturally, his primary concern was the schools, and he devoted many hours each day supervising their repair and reconstruction.

Solana was one of the show places of Montecito (actually, it was inside the city limits of Santa Barbara along with the Billings and Gray estates), and was one of the estates visited on the famous 1926 tour of the Garden Club of America. The visitors found the one-story house and the large patio dominated by the great live oak, spreading some 50 feet, and surrounded by all kinds of flowers. Guarding the premises was Christopher Columbus Cabot, "an entrancing Boston bull terrier," never disturbing the finches and humming birds living in the vines around the patio.

Massive plantings of two varieties of acacias ensured a burst of vibrant yellow color almost the entire year. Paths through the garden led from one beauty spot to another. Below the front (eastern) terrace was a swimming pool overlooking the Montecito Country Club and the vast ocean beyond. To the west was the view of the sturdy Santa Ynez Range.

The inability to rest was taking its toll; at last Peabody began to heed his doctors and in 1926 resigned from the school board and from the board of a local bank. Though he spent more time at *Solana* and his Sandyland beach house, he was unable to resist helping various local needs in his quiet way.

Frederick Forrest Peabody suffered a stroke and died two days later on February 23, 1927, at *Solana* on Eucalyptus Hill. It was a serious loss to Santa Barbara which the community recognized. Flags were flown at half mast and the usual Saturday



Kathleen and Frederick Peabody were spectators at a Bartlett Field polo game.

night dinner dance at the Montecito Country Club was cancelled along with a performance at the Lobero. The ground-breaking ceremony of the new Biltmore was postponed for a week. Rev. Robert Freeman of the First Presbyterian Church of Pasadena conducted the services at *Solana*. A grammar school in the San Roque District, bearing his name, was opened in August 1928.

Kathleen Burke Peabody

F. F. Peabody's estate was shared by his widow, Kathleen, and his offspring under a carefully structured will designed to protect the legacies. Other relatives were awarded specific bequests.

On March 2, 1929, two years after her husband's death, Kathleen married Col. John Reginald McLean at the Santa Barbara Mission. McLean was a former mining engineer whose family had been active in the copper mines of Clifton, Arizona.

The couple had first met in an American hospital in France where she was a nurse when he was recovering from injuries incurred at the Battle of Argonne. At the wedding, Mrs. O. D. Norton was her attendant again and George G. Whitelaw was best man. Returning from their honeymoon in Del Monte, they were in an automobile accident near Santa Maria eight days later. Both were injured, she slightly but he fatally.

A year later Kathleen McLean married Girard Van Barkaloo Hale whom she had met at Soissons during World War I. He was an American muralist and portrait painter and was decorated three times for bravery in action.

Their charitable spirit was widespread. As World War II began, the Hales, responding to a request of the French government, were helping refugees until the fall of France forced them to leave. When the conflict ended, the Hales adopted Maille, a French village wiped out by the Germans. For the few surviving citizens, the Hales completely rebuilt the town, including houses, churches and schools.

Kathleen Hale's charity continued locally. For a number of years she rented a club house to the Girl Scouts and later donated the building to them.

In 1957, the Hales spent a year in Monte Carlo where he was consul general. On their way back to Santa Barbara, they were both taken ill in New York City in the fall of 1958, and died in a New York hospital, four weeks apart.

Solana, reduced to 43 acres, was sold in May 1959 for a paltry \$283,000 to "The Fund for the Republic" otherwise known as "The Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions." Led by Robert M. Hutchins, the Center got off to a grand start in 1952 with a \$15 million grant from The Ford Foundation. Various alterations were made to the mansion during its occupancy by the Center as there was an abundance of money.

According to one local account, Dr. Hutchins was fascinated by a house he drove by every day on his way to the office. Finally, he stopped at the house and identified himself to the owner who graciously took him through the dwelling. At the end of the tour, there was a brief conversation:

Hutchins: I like your house and would like to buy it.

Owner: Sorry, it is not for sale.

Hutchins: Suppose I were to offer you a million dollars for it? [This was before the days of inflated house prices.]

Owner: Thank you. I already have a million dollars.

And with that, Hutchins quietly departed.

The Center had many problems, and when it moved to the university campus at Isla Vista in 1979, the estate had been reduced to 11 acres. In 1954, Kathleen Hale gave about 13 acres to the city for park purposes (never developed) and the Center sold some 30 acres to bolster its finances.

The main house has been extensively restored and again is in private hands. A number of smaller homes have been built along Alston and Eucalyptus Hill Roads on land formerly part of *Solana*.



By the fall of 1984, Solano had undergone many changes since the early photograph. The front garden has a new appearance and the Roman columns are gone. The swimming pool is in the foreground and Eucalyptus Hill Road is at the top of the picture.

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