

Discover Danvers Through Art

By Kathryn Williamson – 8/28/26

Self-guided tour

For this tour, all locations of murals are relatively close to one another. You may choose to take the suggested route or to go your own way.

The suggested route will start from the Peabody Institute Library of Danvers, then to Danvers Town Hall, and finally to the Danvers Post Office. There will also be locations provided in various areas shown in the murals that you can take a car to see. Tapley Memorial Hall, a part of The Danvers Historical Society, will be open on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays from 10-2 to stop by while touring.

Please remember while you are on this tour and exploring these areas:

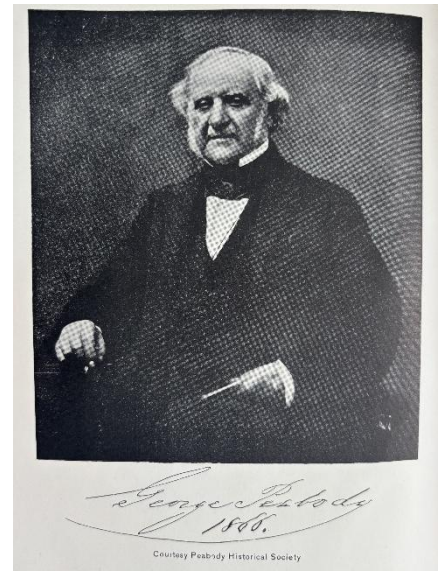
- Please be aware of public hours of the buildings/areas that will be listed
- Be respectful of properties and private residences
- Some areas are only accessible by car, please plan accordingly

The Works Progress Administration was a New Deal agency created in 1934 that employed many people to work during the Great Depression. In Danvers, many artists were employed to make 17 murals to display in Town Hall and other areas around town. Years later, these same murals still remind us of the long history of our town and help us celebrate it today.

Peabody Institute Library of Danvers

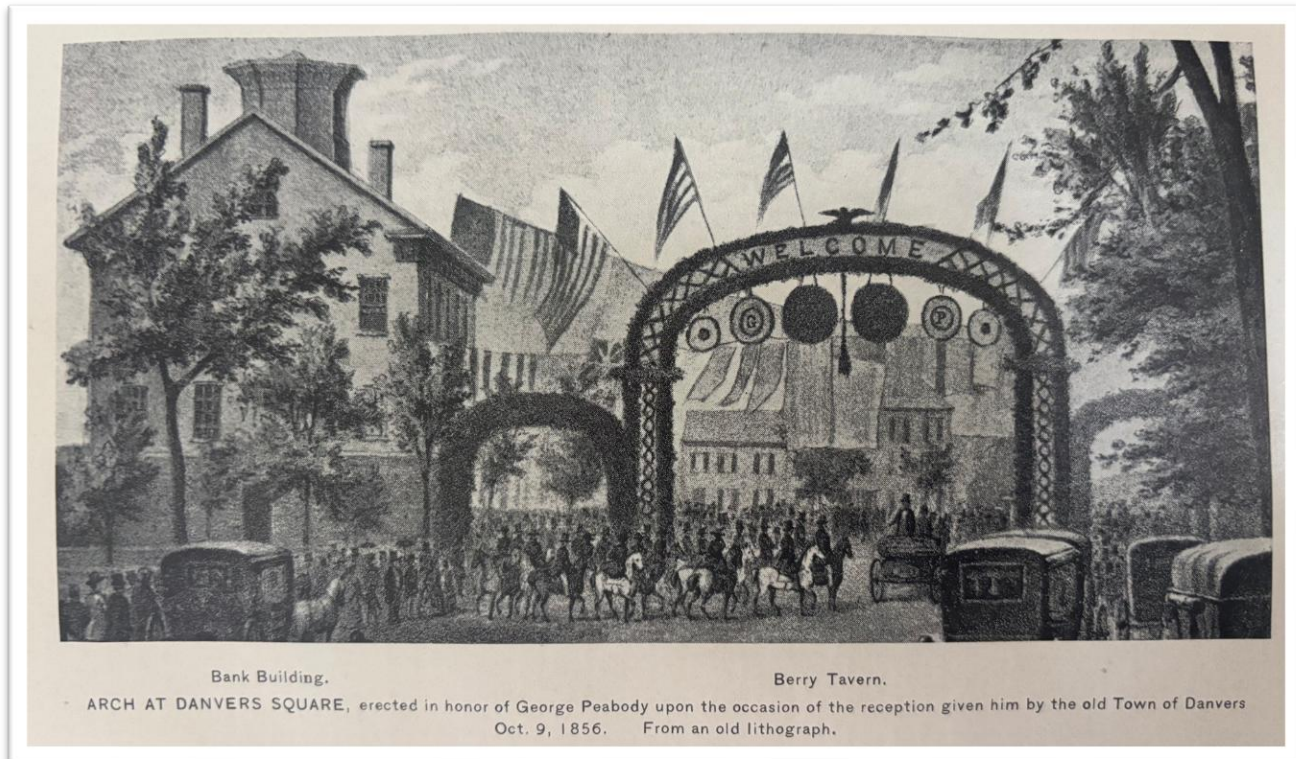
The two murals in the Peabody Institute Library of Danvers are hung downstairs through the children's area, in the Gordon room. This room may sometimes be used as a study room or an event room, so it isn't always open. It is free to enter, if you find it's closed, just ask the desk to open it for you, as it is usually kept locked.

George Peabody



Reception of George Peabody – 1856

The murals are on the right when you walk in. The mural to the left ‘Reception of George Peabody – 1856’ depicts George Peabody returning to his hometown of Danvers and the recently independent South Danvers to a large parade in his honor.



George Peabody gave a lot to this town, including a donation of \$20,000 to build the original structure of the library.



In 1868, South Danvers changed its name to Peabody, to honor the philanthropist. To the right of the mural are two panels of information about George Peabody, and the artist Richard Ellery.

Ellery also painted the 4 murals displayed in town hall. This mural was painted in 1935 along with the rest and found its way here after restoration by the Danvers Rotary Club in 1997.

The Training Field

The painting to the right is another mural painted by Ellery, depicting the ghostly figures of the brave men of old Salem Village who used to meet on this field to run military drills as early as 1671. In 1709, Deacon Nathaniel Ingersoll willed this field to the village as 'A Training Place Forever'. From this field is where the Danvers Minutemen responded to the Lexington alarm on April 19th, 1775. 9 companies of 300 men responded to the alarm, being the most distant town to do so. Danvers had 7 casualties, being the second town to have the most behind Lexington. This field is located at Centre and Ingersoll Streets.



The Training field now, compare with painting!

Danvers Town hall

The next location is Danvers Town Hall. When you walk into the foyer, the four murals are on the wall in front of you, above the staircase. You may view them from the ground floor, or to get a better view, take the staircase or elevator to the second floor. These four murals were made by Richard V. Ellery, Solomon Levenson, and Thomas S. Baker in 1934 as a part of the “Works Progress Administration, Artists and Writers Program” in the New Deal. The artists, as part of the project, completed 17 various murals of important events and figures from Danvers. In 1949, Town Hall underwent a major renovation, and the murals were stored and forgotten.



In 1969, when summer worker for the Danvers Historical Commission, Richard B. Trask, found the murals stored and collecting dust. He recommended three of the murals to be restored, and with help of what became the Danvers Art Association, these murals were restored and hung again in 1971. In 2024, William J. Kossowan and the Rotary Club of Danvers began the mission to preserve the 4th mural, of the 1750's Hopper mansion incident, and it was rehung in 2026.

John's Pear Tree

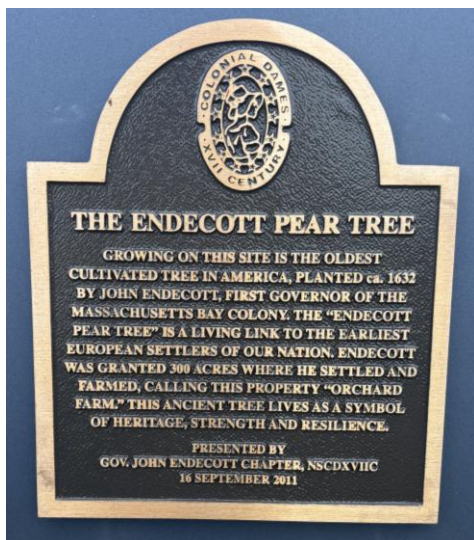


The first mural on the left is of John Endecott (1588-1665), first Governor of Massachusetts Bay Colony. John Endecott arrived in Naumkeag in 1628

and established a permanent settlement and eventually changed the name to Salem, meaning peace. On July 3, 1632, John

received the first grant of land made by the colonial legislature, 300 acres about 3 miles from Salem Town. Around the area of what is now Endicott Street he established a farm, calling it "Orchard Farm", where he cultivated apple and pear trees.

In this mural he is depicted overseeing the planting of the famous 'Endecott pear tree' on the land near his dwelling house. It is one of the many sugar pear trees he had planted in his orchard, making a popular drink called Perry. This mural was made to pay homage to Danvers' most historical artifact leftover from the early puritans. The last pear tree from John's orchard is now 394 years old, it has survived hurricanes, vandalism, snowstorms, disease etc. This tree is now off present-day Endicott Street in Danvers, if you are interested in visiting it, it is in Mass General's parking lot and called Endicott/Endecott pear tree on apple or google maps. You will need a car to get to it, but it's worth it to see the oldest cultivated fruit tree in America.



Hooper Mansion Incident



The next mural to the right is the one rehung in 2026; it depicts an incident in 1774. The 'Hooper Mansion' was built by loyalist sympathizer Robert "King" Hooper in 1754. General Thomas Gage, last Royal Governor of Massachusetts, resided here from June to September 1774.

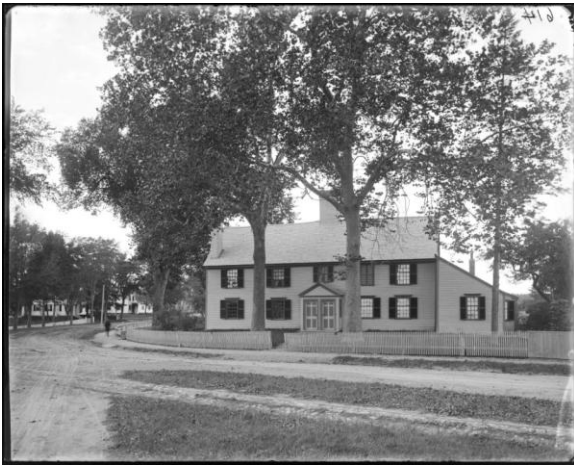
On August 24th, 1774, the passing Minutemen responding to the Salem Alarm

saw the sheet-lead that covered the gate posts and stopped to strip it to make musket balls. Robert 'King' Hooper responded from his door, less than polite about the situation, to which one of the soldiers leveled his musket towards Hooper, who saw the danger quickly went inside. The soldier let off a bullet which passed through the door of the mansion; the hole is still intact today. This mansion, previously near the intersection of Sylvan Street and Linden Drive, was purchased and moved from Danvers to Washington, DC and was rebuilt piece by piece from 1935-1938 over a steel frame. The Lindens is the oldest house in Washington D.C.!



Then vs now . . . compare the fence!

Samuel Holten Home



The third mural from the left depicts historic figure Samuel Holten leaving his Danvers home to act as President of the Continental Congress. Samuel Holten is a founding father of America and signed the Articles of Confederation. He held many esteemed positions in Danvers and America such as serving in the Continental Congress, serving in the United States House of Representatives, as well as having a medical practice in Danvers and joining the Massachusetts Provincial Congress.

His house is just as notable as he was, built in 1677, it has lived through the Salem witch trials, the revolutionary war, the many events of the 17th, 18th and 19th century and now has become a long standing iconic historical landmark of Danvers. This house is still standing at 171 Holten Street and is now a meeting house and museum under ownership of the Daughters of the American Revolution, Holten Chapter.



The house now . . . compare with painting!

First Shoe Factory

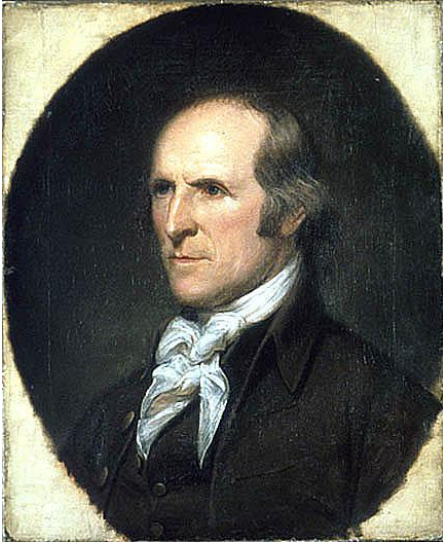


The final mural depicts men working in what is credited as the first true shoe factory in America.

In 1777 on Locust Street, Zerubbabel Porter started the first shoe factory out of his leather currying business. Currying leather is the process of making leather strong, flexible and waterproof.

When the idea of making shoes came to him, he hired men to use the leather scraps. This made it the first factory where paid men were hired to make shoes not for necessity of the local population. His shoes were thick brogans, which were designed for southern enslaved people, and were not of good quality, so it is only by technicality that it can be called a factory. Soon after, others followed the idea and eventually the Putnams opened the largest manufacturing firm in Putnamville, a neighborhood located at the intersection of Locust and Wenham streets.

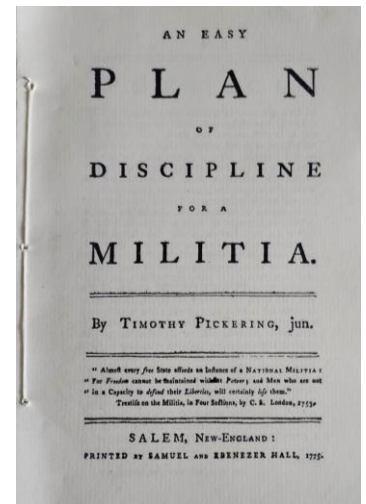
Danvers Post office



Continue north on Elm Street through the busy Town Square intersection, onto Conant Street. There you'll find the Danvers United States Postal Service, where the last mural is hung. Walking through the front, you'll see it painted on the wall above the entrance to the Postmaster's office.

This mural was made by Dunbar Beck in 1939, showing Timothy Pickering returning to his home in Danvers. Timothy Pickering was the 2nd and 3rd Secretary of State, and U.S. Senator, serving under presidents Washington and Adams. He was also U.S. Postmaster General from 1791-1795.

He made a book in 1775 called *An Easy Plan of Discipline for a Militia*, and it was his most famous military book. In 1802 he returned to Danvers to settle on his farm that is now present day 42 Summer St, a private residence.



Thank you for following along on this tour of the murals around Danvers and thank you to all those who care for these works of art bridging many eras of our history. There are more murals in storage to restore and display for public enjoyment and education. Get involved and join the Danvers Historical Society to help support us so we can share more with you! **DanversHistory.org**

