

We take a moment to shine the spotlight on a featured Barn or Stable to learn a bit about their business, their philosophy, and just hear their story ...



RIVER HOUSE HANOVERIANS
WELLSBORO, VT

Highlighting the Heart, Art, and Soul of Dressage:

River House Hanoverians

By Kara Pinato Sero/Jump Media
Photos are courtesy of
River House Hanoverians



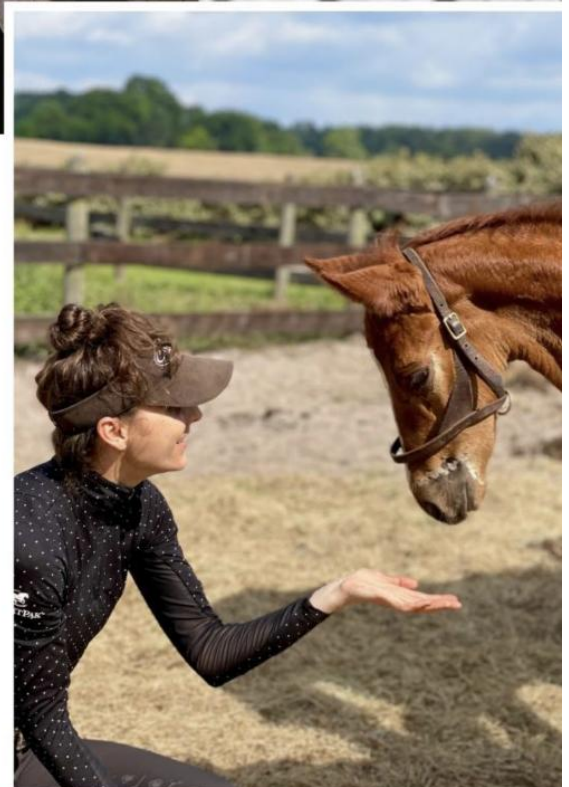
When asked what her favorite part of her job is, Nora Batchelder, a 2019 Pan American Games dressage team silver medalist and resident grand prix trainer at her family's River House Hanoverians in Williston, Florida, pauses thoughtfully before responding with enthusiasm, "It's all fun!" If you have ever chatted with Nora about her business, it's easy to understand why.

All in the Family

Nora, originally an event rider, was born into a family of horse lovers and eventing competitors. Her parents started River House Hanoverians in Piermont, New Hampshire, in the 1980s, primarily as a breeding operation but always played a role in a little bit of everything. The farm sat on 300 idyllic acres and included one full mile of property

overlooking the Connecticut River. The farmhouse she and her sister grew up in was quintessentially New England; built in 1796, it had 13 rooms and nine wood-burning fireplaces.

In her youth, Nora, who is 37 years old, was exposed to numerous facets of the equestrian business. Her mother, Jeanie Hahn, coached her through pony camps, pony club and beyond. Her father, Verne Batchelder—who passed away in 2019—was a renowned clinician on the East Coast, which often meant he spent a lot of time away from the farm. However, Nora speaks fondly of their trip to Europe to purchase sale horses, which exposed her to another side of the business that would lend itself to the well-rounded operation she runs today.





As the years went on, Nora's family took note of their daughter's talent and her aspirations to compete at the highest level. With this in mind, they decided it would make the most sense for the business to have a presence in Florida, given the area's thriving equestrian community. In 2004, they purchased the farm in Williston and began to focus exclusively on dressage at both their New Hampshire farm and the new farm.

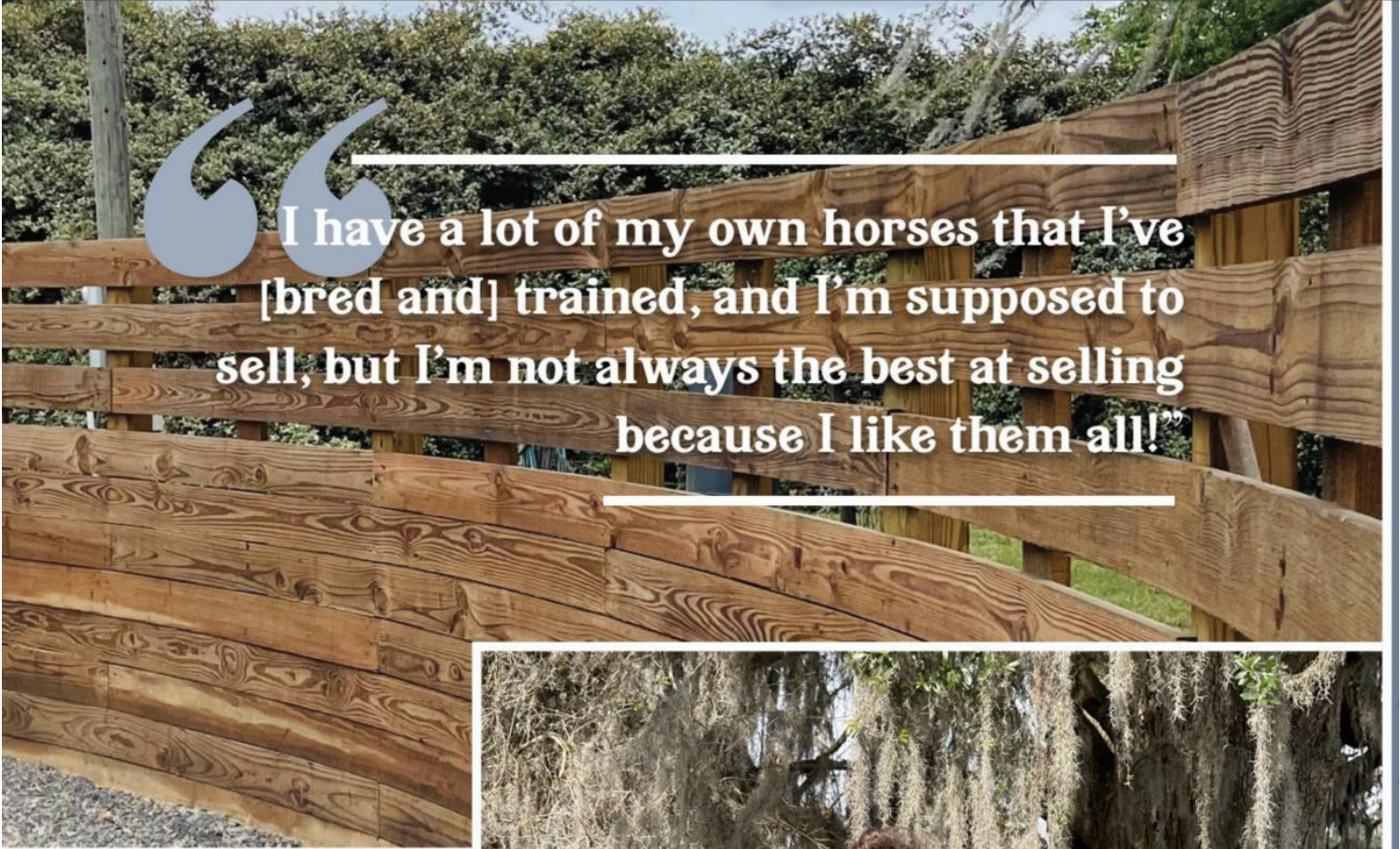
As she prepared to head off for her first year at Amherst College, Nora had to make a tough decision. "I had some really great event and dressage horses," she explained, "but I had to pick one or the other. I had to help pay for school, and I couldn't take them all with me."



In the end, Nora chose dressage, in part because her parents had ventured in that direction, but there was also something special about the discipline that called to her. "I love the art of dressage and also the technicality of it," she shared. "In school, I majored in chemistry and art, and I feel like dressage is the same thing as my academics. I combined something very technical with my more artistic side, so I think dressage really suits me."

Flourishing **in** Florida

About seven years ago, the Batchelders sold the farm in New Hampshire and moved full-time to Florida. Nora jokes that they could've renamed the farm "Sand Hole Hanoverians," but that wouldn't



“I have a lot of my own horses that I’ve [bred and] trained, and I’m supposed to sell, but I’m not always the best at selling because I like them all!”

have the same ring to it. On 35 acres, it’s considerably smaller than the original farm but also uniquely beautiful in its own right, nestled among oak trees trimmed with Spanish moss.

The farm boasts 23 stalls with an outdoor ring and a covered arena, both with mirrors. Just last year, Nora had a new round pen built to support the starting and training of her 2- and 3-year-old horses.

Now at the helm of the business, with the support of Assistant Trainer Selena Collins, Nora puts her heart and soul into training both riders and horses. “I have a range of clients, including a great young rider and a super group of adult amateurs,”

Quality. Class. Distinction.®





Photo: Susan J. Stickle Photography





Photo: Susan J. Stickle Photography



“I love the art of dressage and also the technicality of it.”

she said. “I also have a number of schoolmasters that other people can come take lessons on. I find it hard to sell my former show horses, so they live here forever and teach other people how to ride.”

In addition to competing her own young and FEI-level horses, including her 2019 Pan American Games mount Faro SQF, another part of Nora’s business is taking over training and showing responsibilities on behalf of owners hailing from various parts of the country. In August 2020, Nora had the opportunity to compete W

Girl, owned by Sally Seaver, in the USEF Grand Prix Dressage National Championship at the U.S. Dressage Festival of Champions. Though Nora had just hoped for a solid performance, the pair walked away with the reserve championship. “It’s fun to bring the horses along to where the owners want them to be,” she expressed. “With W

Gangster Girl [at the USEF Grand Prix Dressage National Championship], we didn’t go in hoping to win. So, to be reserve champion, especially because she is the sweetest horse, was very special.”



“With *WGangster Girl* [at the USEF Grand Prix Dressage National Championship], we didn’t go in hoping to win. So, to be reserve champion, especially because she is the sweetest horse, was very special.”

Although breeding and sales were core services when her parents ran the operation, Nora’s close relationship with her younger homebreds and intended sale horses makes it difficult for her to part ways. “I have a lot of my own horses that I’ve [bred and] trained, and I’m supposed to sell, but I’m not always the best at selling because I like them all!” she laughed.

With a thriving training business and busy competition schedule, Nora is grateful to be situated

in an equestrian heartland and in close proximity to World Equestrian Center (WEC) – Ocala. The pandemic and an injury sustained by Faro SQF threw a wrench into Nora’s 2020 competition plans. However, Nora and Faro SQF are back in action and made their second CDI big tour start at WEC’s inaugural CDI3* earlier this year. “Faro and I are still at half power,” said Nora of Faro SQF returning to the show ring, “but we didn’t

want to miss such an exciting event right in our backyard. I think Faro and I have a lot left to do together, and I have dreams of competing at the World Cup Finals and representing the U.S. at the World Championships, Nations Cup competitions or the Olympics.”

“It’s amazing, and everyone is saying it’s like the Disney World for horse lovers,” stated Nora of her experience at WEC – Ocala. “The rings are

“It’s amazing,
and everyone
is saying it’s
like the Disney
World for
horse lovers.”



beautiful; everything is so perfect. The barns are so horse-friendly with the cushioned stall mats and fans for every stall. I really look forward to showing there more often.”

Nora also noted the impact of WEC – Ocala on the equestrian community more broadly. “It’s already inspired a lot of people to dip their toes into international competitions,” she said. “It can be hard to get to Wellington over and over again for the international competitions, so I think it is nothing but positive for the horses and riders. Having more places to compete, I think, is inspiring more people to get involved. I feel really fortunate to have such an amazing venue and atmosphere right at our doorstep.”^(c)