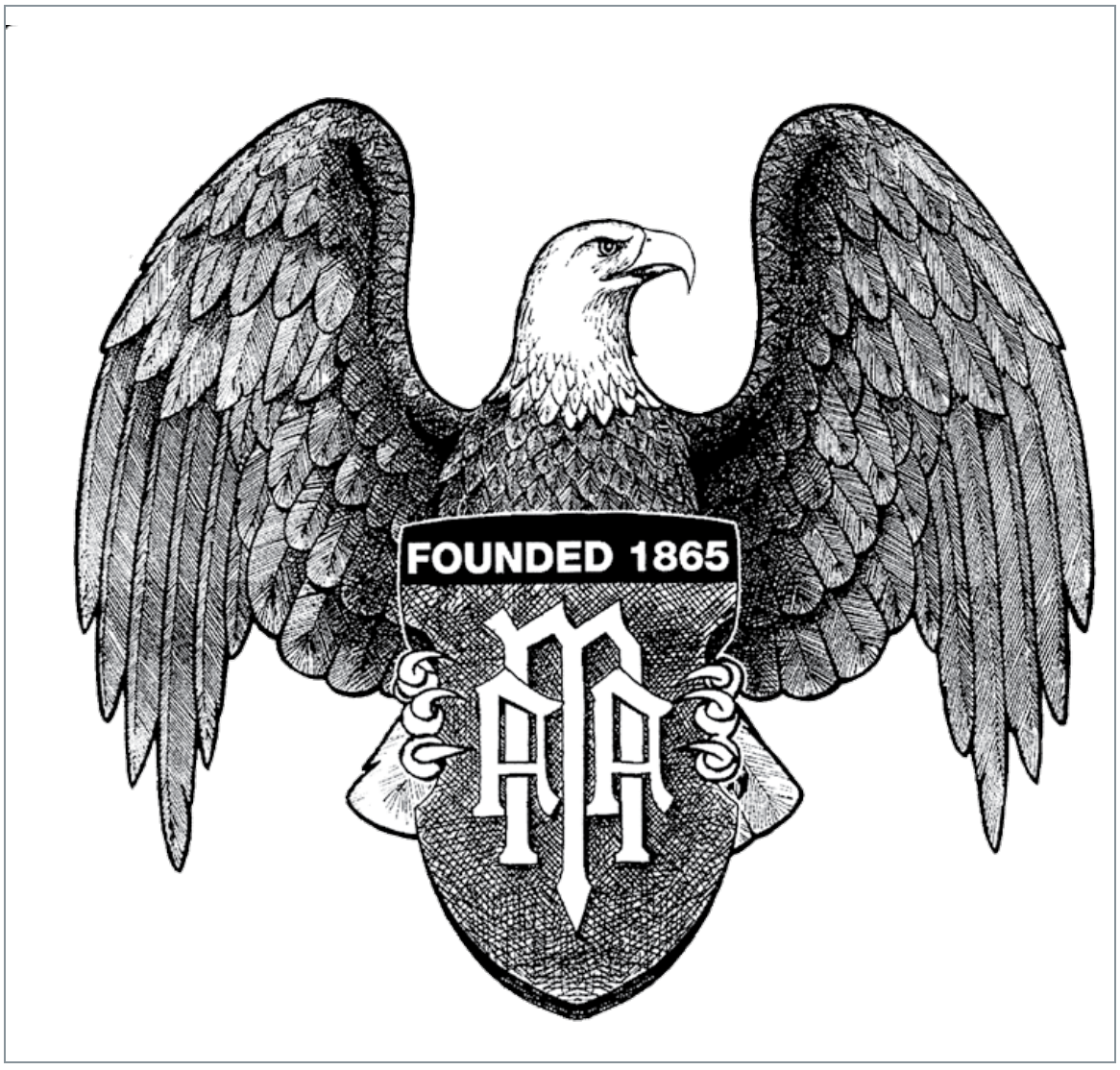
Museum of Augusta Military Academy News



Visit our Website

Ad Astra Per Aspera

MUSEUM OF AUGUSTA MILITARY ACADEMY NEWSLETTER

March - 2024

Chairman's Message

March 1, 2024

Dear Alumni and friends,

I sincerely hope that all of you have had an uneventful winter. Days are getting a little longer and the expectation of the upcoming Spring has certainly brightened up everyone's outlook of things to come.

We are currently entering our second month of the AMA Alumni Foundation Director nomination cycle, so I remind everyone that you have until March 31st to send in your nominations to John Arthur via email **john.arthur@cdg-1.com** or phone at 757 650-6309.

Once again, we are asking for sponsors for the various venues that will be held at our annual Alumni Reunion. If you are interested in becoming a first-time sponsor or are willing to continue to be a sponsor, please contact Herb Maher at 757-353-1977.

Rich, Chris and Keely are hard at work in the museum performing all of the critical tasks that are necessary to keep the house presentable to our frequent visitors and

they continue to engage in the preservation of our collection and history.

Bj d'Orsay reported that as of February 26, 2024, he has scanned all of the grade records from 1926 to 1984 for a staggering 15,820 records on 1,003 scans! Thank you Bj!

So, even in the dead of winter and without any major events on our short term calendar. The AMA Alumni Foundation organization and our Museum, are quite engaged, busy and hard at work to serve our Alumni, friends and guests!

Sincerely,

Douglas W. Pennock
Chairman
AMA Alumni Foundation, Inc.

AMA ALUMNI FOUNDATION NEWS

Visit our new Webpage

The new **Augusta Military Museum Webpage** is up and running! Thank you to Bj. d'Orsay, Chairman of the Virtual Museum Committee and our Web designer, Kirk Fox of Valley Media for a phenomenal job!

We hope that you will be impressed with this new layout. Please remember that this is the maiden launch of what we hope will become a very dynamic, informative and interactive site for the world to see and enjoy.

Please leave your comments **HERE**, or in the **Contact Us** section of the site.

2024 AMA Alumni Foundation, Inc. Annual Election Nomination Announcement

In 2022, changes to the AMA Foundation By-Laws were approved, thus solidifying the annual AMA Alumni Foundation Board

member election procedures. As a result, on-line electronic voting procedures were permanently approved, with the “cycle” for annual elections occurring in the spring (i.e. April elections). Additionally, during the January 7, 2023 Foundation Board Meeting, the Board unanimously approved the addition of four (4) board director positions, an increase from 13 to 17, which took effect for 2023 election cycle.

In accordance with the By-laws: Section 4.3. *Terms*: *Each Director shall be elected for a three-year term, starting with the date of the annual meeting at which they are elected, and until their successors have been duly elected and qualified, or until their death, resignation, or removal. The Board of Directors shall be divided into three classes with staggered terms, with each class as nearly equal in number as may be (i.e. five/six).* Accordingly, one-third of the Directors’ terms of office shall expire/rotate each year. With the January 2023 board position increases, there are a total of **five positions / vacancies** up for consideration in the 2024 “cycle”. The following five board members term expires this year. All five have expressed their desire to serve another term:

Marc Aronson ’68 B.J. d’Orsay ’70 Steve Trent ’70 Gary Cripps ’71 Doug Pennock ‘72

As specified in By-laws: Section 4.4 *Nomination of Directors* (Revised 08 January 2022), the call for nominations shall take place no less than sixty (60) days prior to the designated annual election start date. Notice shall be provided all members via AMA website posting, electronic mail and social media outlets. Nominations are welcome and encouraged for those wishing to become involved in the governance of the AMA Alumni Foundation. In addition to the five incumbents, any AMA

Alumnus or qualified members may present a nomination for a qualified candidate, or may nominate him/herself, for the position of Director. The By-laws Article II: Membership, Section 2.1 & 2.2, delineates board member qualifications, which can be accessed / downloaded **here**. Nominations must be received no later than thirty (30) days prior to the designated annual election start date, with no exceptions. Nomination "window" formally opens NLT **Thursday, February 01, 2024** and will close on **Sunday, March 31, 2024.**

Appropriately, the Election Committee is preparing an electronic ballot to enable on-line voting utilizing Google Forms. If you currently receive the AMA Email newsletter, a link will be sent to your email, where you will cast your ballot. ***If you DO NOT currently receive the AMA Email newsletter and wish to participate in this election, you must add your email to the monthly email distribution list by clicking here.*** Voting will open/commence no later than **Monday, April 01, 2024** and voting will end at **Noon (Eastern DST) Tuesday, April 30, 2024**. This election process will be publicized on the special newsletter, via email announcement, posted on the AMA website, and posted on the social media/Facebook sites.

NOMINATION AND VOTING TIMELINES

- **Thursday, February 01, 2024**: Nomination announcement made on email, website and social media. All those desiring to be nominated should contact John Arthur (**john.arthur@cdg-1.com**) / 757-650-6309 via email or telephone call. Please include Gordon Metz (**gordonrmetz@gmail.com**) on email.
- **Sunday, March 31, 2024:** The nomination deadline / window formally closed.

- **Monday, April 01, 2024:** Election electronic voting commences (30-day window).
- **Tuesday, April 30, 2024:** Electronic voting ends. Results provided to Chairman and Board members.
- **Saturday, May 04, 2024:** Special Zoom Board meeting with new members to conduct elections for Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer.
- **Monday, May 06, 2023:** The election results and the newly-elected Board Officers (Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer) announced in the Museum Newsletter email and on social media.

AMA Alumni Reunion 2024
September 5-7

Headquarters Hotel

Hotel 24 South (Stonewall Jackson)

40 years later. We won't forget

Call 866-880-0024 or 540-885-4848 to make your reservations now and be sure to tell them that you are with the AMA group so that you get the Reunion group rate of $125.00 per night which includes covered parking.

Register for Reunion 2024 HERE

This year's Tour: Jeff Slaven's Cattle Ranch
Location: Weyers Cave, VA
Directions: On I-81, take exit 235. head west toward Route 11. Turn right onto Route 11, heading north. Travel approximately a mile, and turn left onto Burketown Road. Travel approximately 0.7 mile and look for a sign for Cattlemen's Supply Truck Entrance (gravel driveway and blackboard fence) on right.

Thursday, September 5th

9:00 am – 12:00 pm AMA Alumni Foundation Board meeting @ Blueridge Room
10:00 am – 4:00 pm AMA Museum (OPEN ALL WEEKEND)
1:00 pm – Midnight Hospitality Suite @ Skyline Room
LUNCH ON YOUR OWN!

5:00 pm – 8:00 pm Registration @ Shenandoah Ballroom
5:00 pm – 8:00 pm Hors d'oeuvres & Appetizers @ Skyline Room

Friday, September 6th

BREAKFAST ON YOUR OWN!
9:00 am – 11:00 am Band Members Breakfast @ Hotel 24 South
9:00 am – 1:00 pm Golf @ "Winter Green Resort Golf Course"
10:00 am – 2:00 pm Sporting Clays @ "Flying Rabbit Sporting Clays"
11:00 am – 1:00 pm Tour @ "Jeff Slaven's Cattle Ranch"
10:00 am – 4:00 pm Registration open @ Shenandoah Ballroom
1:00 pm – 6:00 pm Hospitality Suite @ Skyline room
LUNCH ON YOUR OWN!
5:00 pm – 7:00 pm Registration @ Shenandoah Ballroom
6:00 pm – 7:00 pm Cocktails @ Shenandoah Ballroom (ATTIRE: Business Casual)
7:00 pm – 9:00 pm Dinner @ Shenandoah Ballroom (ATTIRE: Business Casual)
9:00 pm – Midnight Hospitality Suite @ Skyline Room

Saturday, September 7th

8:00 am – 9:00 am Breakfast @ Shenandoah Ballroom

9:00 am – 10:00 am Annual membership meeting @ Shenandoah Ballroom
11:00 am – 11:30 am "Founders Day" Ceremony @ Augusta Stone Church Cemetery
12:00 pm – 2:00 pm Lunch @ AMA Gym “Mission Barbeque”
Sports Hall of Fame induction ceremony
2:00 pm – 6:00 pm Hospitality Suite @ Skyline Room
2:00 pm – 6:00 pm Fellowship time “You’re on your own!”
5:00 pm – 6:00 pm Registration Open @ Shenandoah Ballroom
6:00 pm – 7:00 pm Cocktails @ Shenandoah Ballroom (ATTIRE: Casual)
7:00 pm – 9:00 pm Dinner @ Shenandoah Ballroom (ATTIRE: Casual)
9:00 pm – Midnight Hospitality Suite @ Skyline Room

REUNION SPONSORS NEEDED!

Help Make Reunion 2024 the best one ever!
Become a Reunion Sponsor

Individual sponsorships are the reason that we have excellent events and meals at our annual get together. The last three Alumni Reunion were so successful because so many of you generously sponsored part or an entire venue.
We expect this year's turnout to be similar to last years, so please help us out.

Following is a list of venues that are available to sponsor:

THURSDAY NIGHT/HOSPITALITY $1,500 - Doug Pennock

FRIDAY BANQUET $6,000.00

SATURDAY MORNING BREAKFAST $3,500

SATURDAY LUNCH $4,200.00 - Tom Del Valle

SATURDAY DINNER $5,500

REGISTRATION $1,500 - Jeff Wenzel

FLOWERS $500 - Jeff Wenzel

Band Co. Breakfast $500 - Anonymous

Our estimated expenses for the reunion is $23,200
We have received $8,200

Sponsorship Shortfall

$15,000

The deadline to submit candidates for the AMA Sports Hall of fame has passed. We will announce the nominees in the April Newsletter.

AMA Legacy Scholarship Season

Only one day left!

March 1, 2024 is the deadline to submit

The AMA Alumni Foundation will be offering three Scholarships in 2024!

There will be two $2,000 Legacy, one $1,000 scholarships offered to deserving candidates.

Two AMA Legacy Scholarship in memory of Jim Towe AMA '60 ($2,000 each), (restricted to AMA descendants), funded by Al Smith '66

The Louise McVey Leonard - Robert P. Leonard Memorial Scholarship ($1,000) is funded by Bill Mcvey '60 in honor of his Aunt and Uncle who paid the tuition for him to attend AMA for 6 years and 4 years at VMI.

Applications should be received at the AMA Museum postmarked no later than March 1st, 2024.

Jim Towe '60 Memorial Legacy Scholarship Letter:

Legacy Letter

Jim Towe '60 Memorial Legacy Scholarship Application:

Legacy Application Form

Louise McVey Leonard - Robert P. Leonard Memorial Letter

McVey-Leonard Letter

Louise McVey Leonard - Robert P. Leonard Memorial Scholarship

McVey-Leonard Application Form

Applicants should look at the scoring Rubric to see how to model their application.

Scholarship Scoring Rubric

PACKAGED WITH DESICCANT
DO NOT OPEN
UNTIL READY FOR USE OR INSPECTION
N335
8 FUZES PD M557
LOT MA-14-139A
LOADED 3-09

M-1 Garand Rifle

RIFLE RAFFLE 2024

Once again, we will be offering a unique and historically important weapon up for raffle. This iconic weapon is credited to be one of the most important tools that won World War II for the Allies. General George S. Patton called it "the greatest battle implement ever devised" Many of you carried the M-1 while at AMA.

The cost is $25 per chance, or five chances for $100. On the form, if you so choose, you can add an additional amount to help us cover the cost of the payment processing fee. There is no limit on the number of chances you may purchase.

Checkout is through our PayPal account **HERE**. It may take a minute or two for the transfer to the PayPal page. Be patient and do not close your browser while waiting. There is an option to use a credit card once you get to the PayPal site. If you'd prefer to pay the museum directly, simple close your browser once you reach the PayPal Site. Print your email purchase confirmation and send that and your check to the museum.

You must be 21 years or older to participate in this raffle.
This raffle is void where prohibited by law.

MUSEU
M

A monthly pledge from everyone that reads this newsletter means that the future of the Museum will be assured.

SET UP YOUR MONTHLY DONATION HERE

DOCENT DUTY

THANK YOU!

Brian Miller '67

Elizabeth Andrews
Professor Charles S. Roller's Great-great Granddaughter

Elizabeth has spent over 30 hours at the museum over the last 2 months scanning her personal historical family photographs and documents and collaborating with Chris with his research.

Thank You Elizabeth

Visitors in February

52

Museum Volunteer

***Be* a Volunteer Docent for a weekend...**

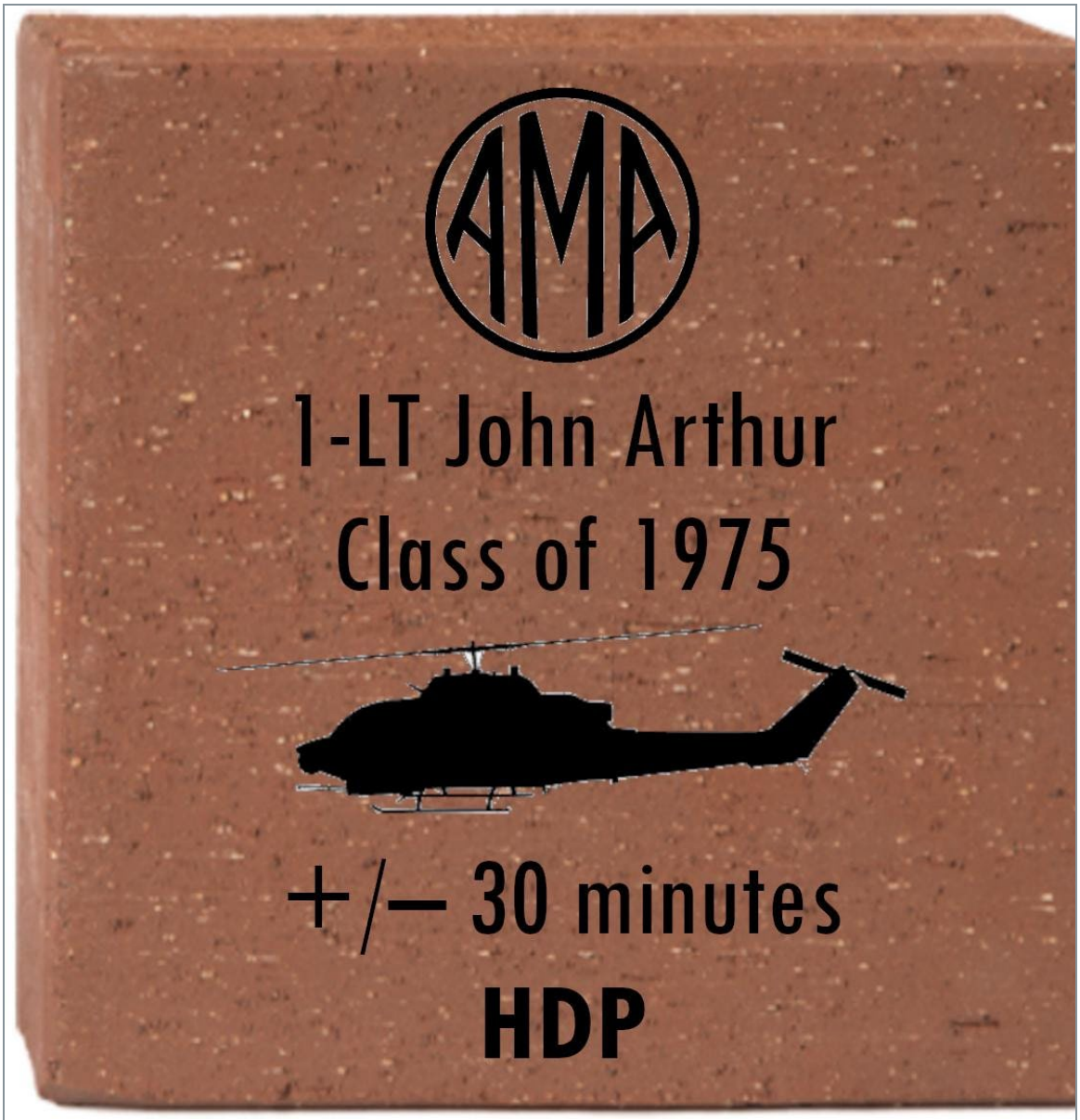
Purchasing a Paver Brick allows you to recognize anyone you knew while attending AMA

All Paver Bricks are placed in a permanent location along the sidewalk running East of the Museum

Visit the Brick virtual map HERE

Please order yours TODAY!

Brick Order Form



Shop at the PX

Notice!

The AMA Alumni Foundation would like to clarify that all of the profits of the merchandise

that is sold through our Museum PX store, the official AMA Facebook page or the AMA webpage, go exclusively to help offset Museum operation costs.

AMA branded merchandise that is sold outside the Museum PX store, an unsanctioned Facebook page or unsanctioned eBay account has no connection or benefit to the AMA Alumni Foundation, Inc. or the AMA Alumni Museum.

17 oz. Mug

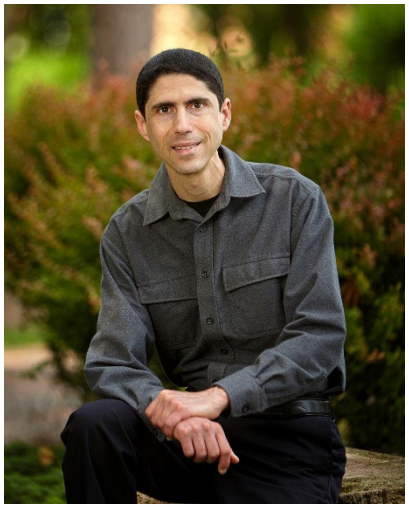
Only $12.00 plus tax and shipping

To order items from the PX, call the Museum at 540-248-2007

Beautiful Wendell August Forge metal serving tray

$50.00

(Limited quantity)



Chris's Corner

Chris Correa, Museum Historian

March 1, 2024

“

Family Business

Last month, I mentioned a bombshell. I don’t mean to dangle that, but first, some prologue.

I have answers, not all of them, but finally I have a sense of what’s happening. There’s certainly not space here for the whole story, but I hope to make it all available eventually, because it’s a fascinating conflict of ideals, interests, and personalities that roiled far behind the scenes of cadet life but which was a silent turning point in the history of the school. What it is not is a conflict of Right vs. Wrong. About that, more later.

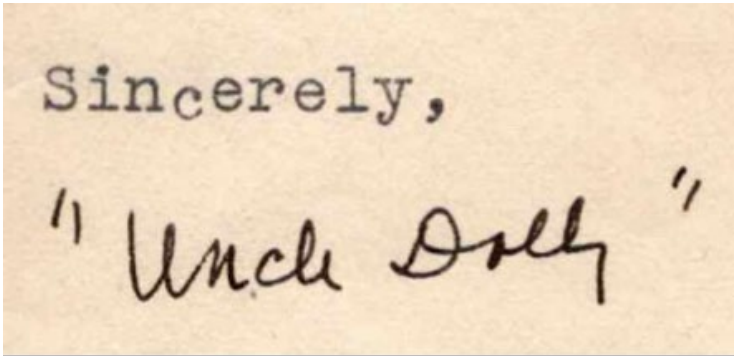
I want so much to do this story justice, but I probably won’t. Please be patient as I get all the pieces on the table and assemble them for you as best I can. What I’ve read this past month has been like discovering the Dead Sea Scrolls – if the scrolls had been kept in plastic sleeves in a binder in Charlottesville for 75 years. The documents I’ll describe in this and future articles were a revelation but not a discovery. A few have always known where they were and

a lot about what was in them. Their contents were never secret, just obscure. I wish I could personally thank everyone in the chain of custody for their stewardship of these old documents, but only one is still alive, and her generosity to the museum has been a historian's horn of plenty.

Elizabeth Andrews is the great-granddaughter of Col. Tom Roller. She inherited all of the documents, photos, and even garments of AMA/Roller history meticulously organized and preserved by her grandmother, about whom, much more to come. Elizabeth has shown me family pictures and letters that cadets never would've seen, because they weren't for the *Bayonet* or *Recall*, just the family photo album and scrapbook. That makes Elizabeth the only source of these artifacts that depict the early history of the Roller family and its school and give its members personalities beyond anything that was ever published. This matters because this place wasn't known as **The Roller School** for nothing. Students, faculty, and staff were the daily life of the school, just as sailors are the life of a ship. They make it function while the brass on the bridge decide where the ship goes and how it gets there. Likewise, the Roller family's decisions and relationships had an outsized influence on the trajectory of the school as a business. You can't fully appreciate how this school evolved without knowing the family owners, and the lessons we can take from that knowledge make it useful history.

The 3 players in this story are the next-of-kin to Col. Tom Roller. Two were his children: Hilton Roller Somerville (later Grasty) and younger brother **Thomas '36**, who went by Tommy. The third was Col. Tom's brother, Col. Charles S.

Roller, Jr. (though to the young Hilton, he was just **Uncle Dolly**, as he signed his letters to her even in 1947):

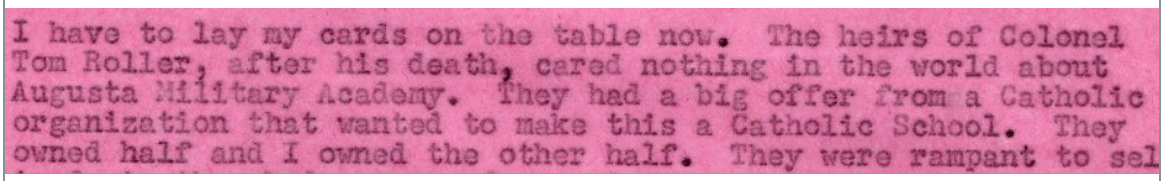


Last month, I detailed the fraught 1951-52 letters from Charles to a parent who had fallen behind on tuition. The letters show Charles warning of the school being sunk by dozens of past-due accounts.

This was startling, because I'd assumed this was a prosperous time. If it wasn't, I wouldn't have suspected parental debts of being an existential threat. That The Big Boy, of all people, would admit in writing – to a customer – that he needed money "desperately" was a further shock. For him nonetheless to make no demands on this parent who owed so much was baffling. I also questioned whether these delinquent accounts could've brought down the academy, unless it was already weakened by some preexisting condition.

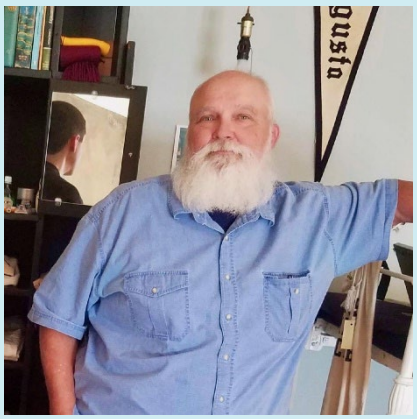
This is where the storylines collide. Back into the student folder, it's now March 25, 1952, and the next letter to the same indebted father has Charles quickly outdoing himself in breathtaking candor. First though, he again opens apologetically, conceding that the father must think him "a pest" and "rather unreasonable" for sending so many pleas for what is owed. Again, he insists that if this was the only delinquent account, "I would smile it through and say nothing." This time though, instead of disclosing, like before,

how many other families were behind or what bills the school had to pay, he launched into new territory (transcribed below the picture.):



I have to lay my cards on the table now. The heirs of Colonel Tom Roller, after his death, cared nothing in the world about Augusta Military Academy. They had a big offer from a Catholic organization that wanted to make this a Catholic School. They owned half and I owned the other half. They were rampant to sel

Continue to read **HERE**



vanBreemen's Expressions

March 1, 2024

Weapons at AMA

By: Rich vanBreemen

You can not think of AMA (or any other military school) and not associate it with military weapons, more specifically, rifles. Present alumni remember what they carried during their time here, which covers only a small portion of the school's history. We have a few examples of actual weapons in the museum and some very old photographs showing cadets with rifles. However, these are of such poor quality that it's hard to discern the exact models of rifles being used.

In the famous Rhoades history of AMA, it is noted that at the start of the school, "The rifles used at the academy (AMA) were

furnished by the state of Virginia and were an exact pattern of the infantry musket used by Confederate forces in the War Between the States." (https://amaalumni.org/wp-content/uploads/The-History-of-Augusta-Military-Academy.pdf). A little history on military weapons during the "War of Northern Aggression": most of the weapons manufacturers for the US military were located in northern states. This, of course, disadvantaged southern states with the onset of hostilities. At first, southern states supplied their troops with confiscated weapons. However, as things quickly escalated, both sides recognized their inability to provide weapons for themselves. Both North and South purchased weapons from European nations like Germany, Austria, Belgium, and England. One of the most prominent weapons on both sides was the Pattern 1853 2 or 3-band Enfield rifle. This weapon was second only to the 1861 Springfield rifle.

Hanging on our museum wall in the Maggie Belle Parlor is a beautiful reproduction 3-band 1853 rifle donated by Don Studer. It proudly represents the rifle talked about in Rhodes's paper on Civil War weapons provided to the school by the Commonwealth of Virginia. Or does it? There has never been any reason to doubt these claims – until recently.

We get many visitors to the museum and campus grounds who are attracted to the place for reasons far removed from the school's history. Among them are paranormal (ghost) hunters, architecture buffs, and many metal-detecting fans (sometimes referred to as RELIC RECOVERY specialists). One such person is

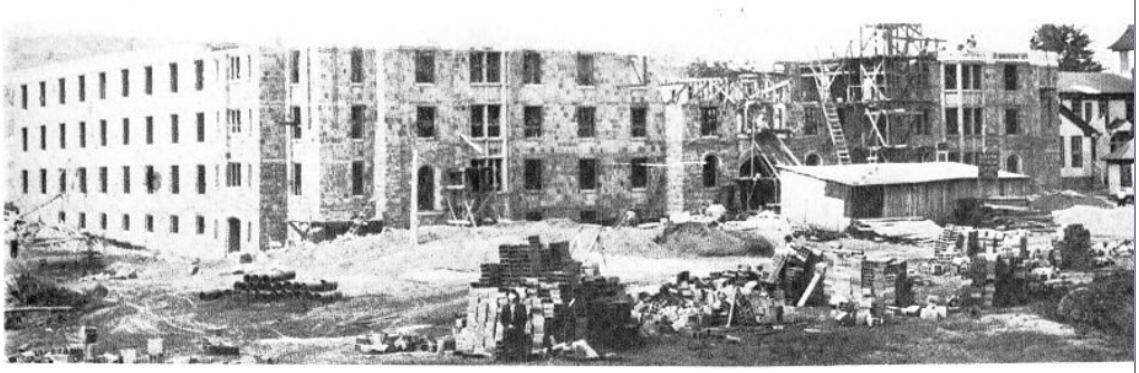
James Snyder, who has been exploring the campus grounds for several years with his metal detector. He routinely shares with us what he has found: large numbers of buttons, belt buckles, and coins. Occasionally, he will turn up an old cartridge case (which we will cover later), but most recently. He brought us a "gun part" that he could not identify.

Behold the item that caused Mr. Snyder's metal detector to go wild as he swept the grass in front of the big barracks. When he showed it to me, he had no idea what it was, but my heart skipped a beat. He found this item roughly one foot deep in the dirt in front of the main gate of the barracks. This is not something from a modern (20th century) weapon. No, this is from a 19th-century muzzleloader! I showed him the Enfield on the wall for comparison, and we were both stunned that this item should turn up where it had. I thanked him profusely for the artifact, and he left me to ponder its origins.

I soaked the part in distilled water and used a nylon toothbrush to remove the dirt and grass. Most of the corrosion remained, but I

had a better view of the part, which I could now clearly identify as the trigger and trigger guard. After comparing it to online references, I discovered this was not from an Enfield rifle but an 1861 Springfield. The protrusion you see on the left of the photo is a screw – the screw which attaches the rear of the trigger guard to the stock. Since this is not a captive screw, its being there indicates (to me, at least) that it was still attached to some part of the stock when it ended up in the dirt in front of the barracks. As often happens with these "historic forensics" situations, we must imagine a scenario where this all makes sense. Here's my take on it.

Construction on the Big Barracks began in 1913 and was completed in 1915. The new barracks would bring many changes to AMA, including a new armory in the basement. Before this, a wooden tower to the right of the Roller House served as the armory. I can imagine the armorer having to do some "house cleaning" before he could transfer all of the weapons and support equipment to the new facility. I am guessing that a broken rifle stock with a trigger guard attached was part of that "housekeeping."



Additionally, evidence suggests that the old muzzle-loading rifles had been replaced with army-surplus Remington Rolling Block rifles by this time. The upgrade in rifles would make Springfield

parts surplus, and a broken part was useless to the school's armorer. During any construction project, there are open holes in the landscaping. These are often used as garbage pits during construction. I suspect it was simply convenient to drop the broken part into a hole and forget about it.

Time marches by just as the cadets marched by on the ground above the decaying gun part. One hundred-plus years later, the wooden stock has rotted away, leaving a corroded screw stuck in the metal trigger guard. Our friend Mr. Snyder digs this artifact up from the ground, and what was once garbage is now a treasured piece of school history!

So does this mean we must replace the Enfield rifle on the wall with a Springfield? Not even remotely. While the new archeological information suggests that Springfield rifles were here, nothing indicates that they were the ONLY muzzle-loading rifles used. Just as in the war, there may have been a variety of rifles on the line. The beautiful Enfield gets to stay.

The Remington Rolling Block rifle displayed in our "BIG ROOM" is touted as being used at AMA. However, there is no information on the origin of this particular rifle, and its connection to the school is unverifiable. That is until you look at some of the other stuff our friend Mr. Snyder has uncovered and shared with us. I think I will save that for my next article.

Doug Pennock's Viewpoint

March 1, 2024

Dear Readers,

Earlier this month, I received a phone call from my son Shawn who lives in Boston. Shawn had just been told via an early morning phone call by his High School buddy and best friend Andre, that Andre's parents had been killed a few hours earlier in a house fire at their home in Puerto Rico. I was shocked and saddened by the news as I knew the parents very well. I am sharing this not so upbeat information with you in an attempt to connect a few dots that most of you will probably recognize and appreciate.

During the years Trudy and I raised our two boys, Doug Jr. and Shawn, they both heard most of my AMA stories and adventures more than once. I even taught them how to “Chalk” and make up a bed properly! As the years passed, both boys were fortunate to meet many of my fellow AMA Alumni friends, whether it was visiting them at their respective homes in the States, or while they would visit us at our home in Puerto Rico. As the boys grew older, they would actually get to **know** many of my AMA friends and accepted them as part of our family. Both my son’s learned at an early age, the importance to always have their friends and

family's six. This is one trait that both of these young men have made part of their personal ethos.

I witnessed that support and love in action over the last week as both Shawn and Doug dropped everything they were doing in their personal and professional lives to offer their unconditional support to Andre and his family at this tragic time. Following a Mass that was held for Andre's parents in San Juan, nearly a dozen of his old High School classmates joined Andre and his family at a local restaurant to celebrate Andre's parents lives and to tell old classmate's stories about the adventures they had experienced together over a quarter century ago. Sound familiar?

I have taken inventory of how many of my AMA brothers I have had the pleasure of talking to or connecting with during the month of February 2024. Excluding emails and phone calls to Rich and Chris at the museum or Facebook messages, I have been in contact with at least ten AMA brothers and even had the pleasure of hosting "Band Boy" Brett Thompson and his significant other at our home for a week!

As I have said many times before, the AMA brotherhood is a special bond. But today I am particularly proud and celebrate that I was able to connect those dots to my sons.

Doug out.

Editor's Note:
The following expressions are mine alone. I look forward to your feedback. You may contact me directly at:
chairman.amafoundation@amaalumni.org

The Museum Newsletter is written and prepared by Doug Pennock and edited by Trudy Pennock

SHENANDOAH VALLEY

BEST

2023 WINNER

HARRISONBURG RADIO GROUP

AUGUSTA MILITARY ACADEMY MUSEUM

- Fort Defiance, Virginia -

MISSION STATEMENT "To preserve the traditions of the Augusta Military Academy and to honor the memory of the life and times of its alumni, faculty, staff, and supporting families through permanent and temporary exhibits and diligent conservation the museum's collections of artifacts, archives and photographs."

The AMA MUSEUM is operated by the AMA Alumni Foundation, which is a 501(c)3, non-profit organization. The museum is manned by a paid staff. Former cadets volunteer their time and talent most every month. Funding for the museum is totally dependent on tax-exempt financial gifts and donations made by the alumni, former faculty, and friends of Augusta Military Academy, as well as the community and visitors to the museum.

Augusta Military Academy Museum | 540-248-3007
| **Museum@AMAalumni.org** | **http://www.amaalumni.org**
1640 Lee Highway
P.O. Box 101
Fort Defiance, VA 24437