Museum of Augusta Military Academy News

November - 2025

THE AMA MEMORIAL

Chairman's Message

Douglas W. Pennock '72

November 1, 2025

Dear fellow alumni and friends,

I am pleased to report that we have opened a new account with our investment company, Raymond James, titled "**AMA Memorial Construction Fund**." The funds collected into this account will be used exclusively for the design, pre-construction permitting, construction, and long-term maintenance and upkeep of the Augusta Military Academy Memorial. We plan to build the Memorial on the Old Augusta Presbyterian Church property, offering panoramic views of the AMA campus.

As of Thursday, October 16, 2025, the AMA Memorial Construction Fund has a balance of $50,000! The funds deposited into the fund have come directly from sitting AMAAF Board members. We are off to a fantastic start in raising the funds needed to bring the AMA Memorial to fruition.

As you can tell, members of the AMA Alumni Foundation Board of Directors are fully committed to this historic project. At this time, I am asking everyone to consider donating to the AMA Memorial Fund. You can read the **Donor Agreement**, which outlines how the funds will be used and states that if the Memorial is not built, you may choose to have any unused funds returned.

If you prefer to send your donation directly to the Raymond James account, I will be happy to provide you with the wiring instructions. Otherwise, you can send a check identified as a donation to the AMA Memorial Fund to Rich vanBreemen, who will ensure the funds are deposited into the proper account. Rich will also provide you with a letter from the AMAAF for IRS purposes.

Please note that this "Capital Campaign" is specifically for the AMA Memorial project. We still need everyone to continue supporting the Museum's daily operations costs through your

customary donations, which fund 100% of the Museum's operating budget. The Museum will be open and fully operational until at least late 2028.

Cordially,

Douglas W. Pennock
Chairman

I'll provide everyone with more information as the Construction Committee progresses through our pre-construction due diligence. In the meantime, you may want to view the PowerPoint Presentation of our architectural renderings of the Memorial, which includes a short **film loop** that will help you "feel" what a visit there will be like.

Cordially,
Douglas W. Pennock
Chairman

SCHOLARSHIP CORNER

By: Garry Granger '71
Scholarship Committee Chair

This is the inaugural "Scholarship Corner." It'll be an occasional

article regarding updates on alumni offspring who received AMA Scholarships.

We have an update on two of the five 2025 scholarship winners. Elyza Dayao – granddaughter of Evelyn and **Victor Gomez ’69**, is a senior at San Pedro College in Davo, Philippines, where she is studying Nursing. She recently received a First Semester Academic Award of Excellence with Honors. Erick Berroa, son of **Billy Berroa ’81,** was also recognized for his academic achievement from Wheeling University in Wheeling, WV, where he is a sophomore and member of the Track Team. WU recognizes student-athletes who maintain a high GPA while competing in their college sport. They typically ask for a GPA of 3.25 or higher, which isn't easy considering you're also training and competing. We send our very best to these two **WELL DESERVING** AMA Scholarship recipients and wish them astronomical success!

AMA Scholarship Committee Press Release

New additions to replace vacancies on the AMA Scholarship Committee by Dr Mary DeCredico and Doug Pennock ’72.

A search was conducted to replace Dr Mary’s position as the non-alumnus member … Thank you to Larry Reed ’69 and Bj d’Orsay ’70, who recommended qualified members.
We’ve added the following two non-alums to the committee, who will participate and then make the final decision on the

2026-27 Scholarships… we are blessed to have such skilled additions… please welcome them!

Non-Alumni Members

Dr. Soumi Eachempati, MD, MBA – Resides in New York and Florida. He is the Co-Founder and CEO of Cleared4. Dr Eachempati is a former Professor of Surgery and Public Health at Weill Cornell Medical College and was previously the Director of Trauma and the Surgical ICU at New York-Presbyterian Weill Cornell Center. He's also a Fellow in Surgical Critical Care at Duke University's School of Medicine and is an excellent addition to our organization.

Brenda Martinez – She is the Senior Associate Registrar/Associate Managing Director, Office of the Registrar, Texas Tech University in Lubbock, TX, where she's worked for 23 years. Her degree is in Agricultural Science. Brenda was recently inducted into the Honor Society of Phi Kappa Phi, which recognizes and promotes academic excellence. Brenda's leadership skills and involvement in numerous organizations bring a high level of educational skill to the committee.

Doug Pennock asked to step down as a member of the committee, stating that his time is consumed with fundraising, construction of the AMA Memorial, and affairs associated with the Museum…I asked Phil Bentley '83 if he would take 24 hours to consider rejoining the committee he chaired for so many years to fill this vacancy…He responded immediately, saying," No thought necessary, I'd be happy to rejoin." Welcome back, Phil!

Garry Granger'71
AMAAF Scholarship Chairman

A Tribute to an American Patriot

At the conclusion of Reunion 2025, Trudy and I began a 3-week road trip that would take us to many cities and sites across 14 states. Our last stop was New Orleans, Louisiana, where we spent three nights and celebrated our 49th wedding anniversary with Lee, AMA '73, and Karen Ramsey. A good portion of our second day in NOLA was spent at The National World War II Museum. This magnificent tribute to the American and Allied forces who fought and died in that war is a must-see for anyone interested in U.S. military history or in history in general.

As they say, “War is hell,” and many of the National World War II museum displays and photographs can be upsetting. I was especially disturbed by what I was reminded of and learned in one of the museum's exhibit rooms. The area is dedicated to the shameful decision the U.S. government made shortly after the Japanese surprise attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. In February 1942, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066, which authorized the removal of all people of Japanese ancestry from the West Coast. The forced removal of approximately 120,000 Japanese Americans started, initially moving them to temporary "assembly centers" before transferring them to one of 10 permanent inland internment camps.

Shawn Ogimachi, AMA class of 1977, had told me a few years ago that his father, Dr. Naomi Neil Ogimachi, a U.S.-born citizen of Japanese descent, was one of the 120,000 people that was forced to move into one of those internment camps.

I think it is appropriate that, because the AMA Museum is the keeper of our history and legacy, which is made up of thousands of intertwined stories that relate to individual cadets, I dedicate a few inches of editorial space to share Shawn's father's story in this month's newsletter.

I asked Shawn to write a short introduction for the memorial video honoring his father. I invite you to watch the video by clicking the hyperlink that appears immediately after Shawn's introduction.

-Doug Pennock-

The Ogimachi family was "interned" in the Manzanar Relocation Camp early in 1942, along with others of Japanese descent on the West Coast. Born American citizens, my father and each of his three brothers served in the US armed forces during World War 2. Farmers in eastern Oregon and Idaho, desperate for labor to harvest potatoes and sugar beets, hired gangs of interned Japanese/American boys to harvest crops during the war. When my father's draft orders arrived at Manzanar, he was in southern Idaho. He immediately returned to Manzanar to be inducted into the US Army. He proudly served and was deployed to Europe. In an ironic twist of events, he served as the Sergeant of the Guard over German war criminals in Germany. The barracks that housed the prisoners were the same Army-designed barracks where he and his family lived at Manzanar.

My father was such a proud vet and American that his grave marker was inscribed with his rank of Sargent and US Army below his name.

Shawn Ogimachi AMA - 1977

Dr. Naomi Neil Ogimachi

Sgt. Naomi Neil Ogimachi 1944

Naomi Neil Ogimachi Memorial Video

[Click Here for the Video]

The museum of Augusta Military Academy has once again won Gold for Best Museum in the Shenandoah Valley!

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

MUSEUM
DOCENT DUTY

THANK YOU!

Visitors in October

105

Museum Volunteers

Brian Miller '67
Victor Gomez '69

Elizabeth Andrews
"Professor" Charles S. Roller, Great-great-granddaughter

***B*e 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

Brick Order Form

SHOP HERE

Notice!

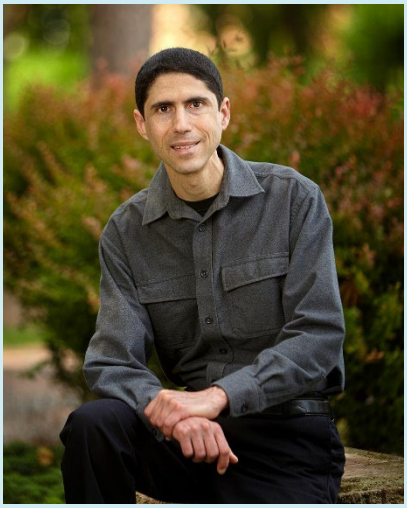
The AMA Alumni Foundation would like to clarify that all of the profits from merchandise sold through our Museum PX store go exclusively to help offset Museum operation costs.

17 oz. Mug
Only $14.00 (Plus tax and shipping)

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

Wendell August Forge metal serving tray

$50.00



Chris's Corner

Chris Correa
AMA Museum Historian

November 1, 2025

What You Find When You're Busy Looking for Something Else

By Chris Correa

Part 3: It Ends in Dust

"That's the state motto of Virginia," I answered, to a question no one asked.

Tour Guide Pro Tip: if someone asks you a question, and you're stumped, admit you don't know and quickly tell them something you do know.

In this case, the question was, "What's that mean?" as the visitor pointed above the gym's front left door:

The letters over the shield were so stylized, I wasn't even sure what they were, much less able to translate the words they formed. I confessed my ignorance and swiftly pivoted to the right side:

In the center of this picture is the **1912 version** of The Great Seal of the Commonwealth of Virginia. The guardian spirit, Virtus, is depicted with a spear in her left hand, a sheathed sword in her right, standing on the defeated Tyranny. Below them is carved *SIC SEMPER TYRANNIS*:

“Thus always to tyrants,” I translated for the visitors and probably proceeded to prattle on about Professor Roller being a Latin geek, and how the motto, *Ad Astra Per Aspera*, “To The Stars Through Difficulties”, defined the AMA experience…before deftly segueing back to stories of sports and dances.

Like a magician, I was resorting to misdirection. I had no idea what was going on with the inscription above the state

seal, and I needed their attention away from it before they got curious. As with the carving the visitor had already asked about, I couldn't even decipher these letters, and my ego was racing to avoid being caught flat-footed on consecutive questions.

Privately, I was a little embarrassed by not having pursued this question after nearly 6 years on the job. My only defense was the utter lack of prior interest in it or reference to it. Alumni had never mentioned the gym carvings to me. I'd never found them in any school document. It was as if those carvings that cadets passed under from **1929**-83 never earned anyone's attention, and until this tour, none of our visitors had asked me about them. That kept it far down my list of research priorities.

Then, during a February visit, Doug Pennock '72 took an interest in the first carving and wrote about it at the end of his **March newsletter**. He called the inscription in the photo "an enigma. The Latin words inscribed on the work is 'PATISTA NON' Literally translated meaning - **No Suffering**?" Doug wondered if it meant that "if you take advantage of what you can do in this gymnasium, there will be no suffering?" For now, with nothing else to go on, Doug's guess was good enough for me.

I didn't know that the final answer was already forming. It had been for a while. The descendants of Col. Tom Roller were making it possible, but they didn't know it yet either.

In my last article, I said that, on May 2, Mary Baldwin student Jacob Cude asked us for assistance with his research into Black Americans of Augusta County. To my great surprise, he'd already found that two of them had been employed here decades earlier than I'd expected. One, a face in a

1905 class photo, remains unidentified, but James F. Shorts is listed in the 1930 census as a Black employee of the school and Col. Tom Roller. Jacob was interested in anything else we could find on James or his peers.
Col. Tom's great-granddaughter, Elizabeth Andrews, went looking that same day. Her first finds were not about James but about the Tom Roller household. That's how we learned more about Mary Clark, who I'd stumbled on earlier while researching James "Boots" Walker and The Fort. Elizabeth also found Millie Fuller, who, like Mary, was central to the lives of the children who grew up in Beaumont. Those were both major discoveries about Black Americans at, or closely related to, AMA, but James was eluding us.
Then, multiple streams of coincidence started flowing toward each other.
Just 2 weeks earlier, Col. Tom's grandson, David, had made a surprise visit to the museum, when Elizabeth happened to be here.

For these cousins, this first-ever encounter was totally unexpected. Thursday was not Elizabeth's usual day at the museum. David, who lives in Savannah and Denver, was only passing through Virginia with his wife and friends and had just enough time for a detour. Through the afternoon, Elizabeth and David exchanged stories that filled important

gaps in their understanding of their extended family. Elizabeth had many more pictures at home that she wanted David to see, so in the coming days, she continued e-mailing him images from her archive.

Now back to May 2. This is when her searches for additional family photos and traces of James Shorts converged to decipher those cryptic Latin phrases above the gym. It started with Elizabeth finding this 1920 picture in her family album:

She recognized Col. Tom's wife, Virginia Greider Roller, holding her 3-year-old son, **Tommy '36**. This was perfect to e-mail to David, because that's his father, but she included me in the message to confirm her hunch that this was taken at AMA, on the porch of the Roller-Robinson house, which is now the museum.

Well obviously, right? Tommy grew up next door to the school in **Beaumont** (a.k.a. “Col. Roller’s Residence” in the **1925 catalog**). Maggie Belle was living on campus in the original Professor Roller House, which is allegedly attached to the porch in this picture. There’s the academic building/old gym in the background. The chair’s long shadows stretching northwest indicate it was early, and their clothes show us it was cold. Okay, so one chilly morning, Virginia takes her son on the short walk to her sister-in-law’s for a visit. Maggie Belle snaps their photo on her porch. Done. It all makes sense.

“How quaint,” sneers the opposing lawyer in my brain, “but other than shadows and heavy coats, you’re spinning yarn out of circumstantial evidence. Start with what *actually is obvious*: the picture is not labelled ‘Virginia and Tommy at AMA’. Plus, the porch in that photo and the scene behind Virginia and Tommy look nothing like the view from our porch today. *See? Get the point? Get the point?*”

While I could do without his snarky **Col. Hoover impersonation**, my internal opponent had…well…a point. How do I prove my case? The porch has been redone many times over the last 146 years. The current one is **barely 25 years old**, and lots of porches look like the one in the old picture, so that part of the image wasn't going to give me a positive ID.

The key to these pictures was their backgrounds. I needed to prove how the scene in the old picture is the AMA of 105 years ago and how it came to look the way it does now.

Start on the right. It's empty land: no gym, no pool complex. Why?

Augusta's first-ever swim meet was in **February 1920**, but it took over 4.5 years for the academy to install its own facility. When this *winter* team finally got its pool, it was outdoors (*Staunton Evening Leader* September 18, 1924, p.3). It was still exposed when this picture appeared in the **1928** yearbook:

(It amazes me that cadets actually volunteered for this. I tell visitors that these must've been highly-motivated swimmers, and indeed, AMA's **"blue clad mermen"** went undefeated against prep schools from 1920-1929.)

Continue reading HERE

Doug Pennock's Viewpoint

November 1, 2025

Dear readers,

Ever since I joined the AMA Alumni Foundation Board of Directors in 2017, and especially after my colleagues elected me Chairman in 2019, my primary focus and drive have been on overseeing the Museum's operations and supporting well-attended and organized alumni events.

A few years ago, the AMA Foundation Board decided to focus our attention on the inevitable closing of our museum. A decision that we were compelled to make primarily because our lease with the Pentecostal Church expires in October of 2028.

From the moment the closing of the museum was decided, the museum staff and volunteers have diligently been organizing, digitizing, and preparing to convert the museum into a Virtual museum, as well as preparing for the return or reinstallation of the AMA Museum collection to its original owners or in other venues, all this, and they still take care of every museum visitor. Shutting down the museum is an enormous undertaking, if it is done correctly, responsibly, and with reverence. I can assure everyone that we will do it correctly!

I am still somewhat astounded by the AMA alumni's powerful and positive reaction to my presentation of the AMA Memorial project at this year's reunion. I suppose I should not be so surprised, since the AMA Memorial, in a sense, represents the "closure" that we all have been looking for but were never willing to accept. There will come a time in the not-so-distant future when the last AMA alumnus will pass on to another place. Our AMA Memorial will be the only thing remaining that will forever say to all visitors: "They arrived here as boys, and left here as men."

Moving forward, all of my focus and energy will be devoted to making the AMA Memorial a reality. I can enthusiastically say that, based on conversations I have had with alumni over the past 60 days, our AMA Memorial will be made a reality before the Museum's lights are turned off.

Doug out

The Museum Newsletter is written and prepared by Doug Pennock.
Trudy Pennock and Marc Aronson '68, editors.

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.

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