Notes on Tours
By Chris Correa
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I want to tell you about a Roller whom none of us knew. He wasn't a Big Boy, a Colonel, or a Professor. His grave isn't honored on Founder's Day, because he lies in the hidden "old" cemetery across the road, but he deserves our appreciation.

Granted, there's a dilemma in talking about the Rollers. They started and sustained the school, and it was family property for over 104 years. Their lives and personalities shaped the course of the school's history. Still, they were just a few of the thousands of cadets, faculty, and staff that are the AMA story, so I try not to dwell too narrowly on the Roller storyline nor so long in the deep past.

I'm doing it here, because I doubt this Roller ever got his due. Duke Fancher '58 mentions him only as a farmer, merchant, and postmaster in Mount Sidney, but Duke doesn't cite his source, and I thought the trail ended there. Then I noticed a history book Don Studer donated long ago, *My Augusta: A Spot of Earth Not a Woman*, by C.E. May, and I learned how much this Roller matters.

Jacob Roller was the Professor's father. He was born in Rockingham County in 1809 but moved south to marry the wealthy Margaret Hyde. I don't how much her money helped, but he was able to buy 3 lots in Mt. Sidney, including his home on the valley pike, plus another 3 adjacent to town.

Altogether, Jacob had some decent acreage and did okay, but it appears he still wanted a different life for his son. We have no statement from him saying so, but why else would he send Charles to two prep schools and then law studies at UVa only for him to inherit the farm?

Local historian and friend of the museum, Evan Knappenberger, says that Jacob worked for Jed Hotchkis at his school. Since Jacob was already farming, it's plausible that this additional labor was in trade for his sons' education.

However he enabled it, Jacob had a plan. He gave Charles extraordinary opportunities for a farmer's son, an education that would send Charles off the farm to a new level of success. Jacob sacrificed for his son and was soon to be the proud father of a lawyer.

AMA existed, because Jacob's plan failed. Charles never returned to Charlottesville. He came home after the war to teach in a little schoolhouse at the family church. Now, Charles was the one sacrificing, passing up potential wealth and status to give the same extraordinary opportunities that he'd received, and he gave it to boys like him. The sons of farmers, ranchers, and craftsmen, lacking the cash for more patrician prep schools, could access the same education by what they made, grew, or raised.

Jacob gained nothing. May writes that, by the end of the war, Roller was widowed and financially ruined. He married again to a woman who insisted on *what's mine is mine, and what's yours is mine too*. At his death in 1884, his estate totaled $58.50, but he was in debt to his sons by over $300.

Despite all Jacob lost, I hope he was proud of what he'd given Charles. I hope he recognized that his chief legacy was his son's fledgling academy down the road. Even if not a plank of it went up with Jacob's money, his vision and sacrifice for Charles would culminate in AMA's life-changing education for thousands of boys. Jacob didn't live to see its greatness, but having learned about his goodness, I want you and our visitors to know it too.

Thanks for reading.