

# [History of ama](https://assignbuster.com/history-of-ama/)

\* About the AMA \* History \* Mission \* Board of Directors \* For the Media \* Careers \* Corporate Members \* FIM Affiliation The History Of The AMAShareToday, it seems only logical that motorcyclists would have their own organization to address the issues that are important to them. But at the time the AMA was founded, this was a rather revolutionary concept. To fully understand the emergence of the AMA as the worlds premier member-driven motorcycling organization, it is first necessary to understand the forces that led to its creation. In large part, the roots of the AMA can be traced to two organizations that preceded it, the Federation of American Motorcyclists (FAM) and the Motorcycle and Allied Trades Association (M&ATA).

The Federation of American MotorcyclistsThe formation of the FAM can be traced to the New York Motorcycle Club, whose members in early 1903 saw the need for a national motorcyclist organization and assembled a committee to study the interest level in such an organization. Further momentum for the creation of this organization was provided by the enactment of a New York City law requiring registration of motorcycles as motor vehicles. On September 7, 1903, the FAM was officially formed during a meeting of 93 enthusiasts at a clubhouse in Brooklyn. The meeting was chaired by George H. Perry, and one notable attendee was George M. Hendee of the Indian Motocycle Company, who brought 109 membership pledges from the New England area. A constitution was drawn up, and officers appointed, with R.

G. Betts of New York as president. Article I, section 2 of the constitution of the newly created FAM stated: “ Its objects shall be to encourage the use of motorcycles and to promote the general interests of motorcycling; to ascertain, defend and protect the rights of motorcyclists; to facilitate touring; to assist in the good roads movement; and to advise and assist in the regulation of motorcycle racing and other competition in which motorcycles engage.” The constitution also recorded annual membership dues of $2, and named several committees, including: Membership; Legal Action; Competition; Roads, Touring and Hotels; and Transportation and Facilities. During its 16-year existence, the FAM developed competition rules and rider classifications, dealt with restrictive ordinances in cities like Chicago and Tacoma, Washington, and wrestled with funding and membership concerns.

The FAM listed 8, 247 members in 1915, but with World War I draining potential members, the organization went out of business in 1919. The Motorcycle and Allied Trades Association (M&ATA)Throughout the years of the FAMs existence, there were indications of the increasing health and vitality within the fledgling American motorcycle industry. One of these was the formation of several trade associations. Among the earliest was the Motorcycle Manufacturers Association, formed in 1908 to represent and regulate the motorcycle manufacturers, accessory makers and distributors. On November 15, 1916, a similar organization, the Motorcycle and Allied Trades Association, was founded. When failing membership rolls eventually ended the FAM, the M&ATA was left without a counterpart representing riders. So, although it was controlled by the motorcycle industry, the M&ATA Education Committee began registering clubs and supporting motorcycle activities. By 1920, the M&ATA began supporting the annual Gypsy Tours, attracting even more members as a result.

The M&ATAs Competition Committee was created to cover the former FAM racing responsibilities. And in 1919, its members identified the need for a separate riders association. Rider registration, regulation and the encouragement of events began that year. The first chairman of the Competition Committee was W. H. Parsons, editor of Motorcycle and Bicycle Illustrated magazine, who stated in his publication: “ This plan of registration is not, strictly speaking, the organization of a riders association, though it is expected that this will be the foundation upon which eventually will be built a strong and efficient rider organization which will be affiliated with the M&ATA for competition control. The preliminary plan of registration at the nominal fee of 50 cents is the affiliation part of the program.

When a large list of registered motorcyclists has been obtained, it will then be possible to perfect the independent association, with the registered motorcyclists as the chartered members. Following five years of growth, the M&ATA-registered Riders Division was named the American Motorcycle Association on May 15, 1924. The M&ATA later united with scooter trade representatives to become the MS&ATA.

And in 1969, it merged with the West Coast Motorcycle Safety Council to form the Motorcycle Industry Council (MIC), which continues today. The American Motorcycle Association” The slogan of the AMA will be: An Organized Minority Can Always Defeat an Unorganized Majority.” (Western Motorcyclist and Bicyclist, May 20, 1924)The Motorcycle & Allied Trades Association (M&ATA) began registering riders in 1919, and by early 1924, it claimed about 10, 000 members. On May 15 at a meeting in Cleveland, the directors of the M&ATA proposed to create the “ American Motorcycle Association” as a division of the M&ATA. The new AMA would control rider registration and activities, issue sanctions for national events, and serve motorcycle industry members. The registered M&ATA riders were transferred as AMA charter members, while individual AMA membership dues were set at $1 per year. The motorcycle industry was represented in the AMA in three membership classes: “ Class A, which included large motorcycle companies; “ Class B, which included supply and accessory companies; and “ Class C, which included motorcycle dealers.

The official ratification of the AMA became effective on August 1, and the first national event operated under an AMA sanction was most likely the second annual National Six Days Trial, held from August 25 through 30 in Ohio and adjacent states. This was a 1, 400-mile endurance run that started and finished in Cleveland. Membership growth was at the top of the early AMAs list of priorities. As Parsons stated in the May 20, 1924, issue of Western Motorcyclist and Bicyclist: “ Plans are under way to start membership contests and build up the AMA to a live and active fighting organization for the benefit of the motorcycle riders of America. Instead of the 10, 000 members now registered with the M&ATA, it is expected that the AMA will have a membership of 50, 000. For the first few years, the AMA maintained an office at 326 W.

Madison St. in Chicago, with A. B.

Coffman (previously with the FAM and the M&ATA) as secretary. The secretarys responsibilities grew substantially over those years, and Coffman was not able to serve full-time because of other duties. The president of the M&ATA at that time, Jim Wright, hired a full-time secretary for the AMA in October 1928. The new secretary was E. C. Smith, a former referee for the FAM and M&ATA.

Along with one staff assistant, Smith relocated the AMA office to 252 N. High St. in Columbus, Ohio. The AMAs subsequent Columbus locations included: 8 E. Long St., 106 Buttles Ave.

, and 5030 N. High St.; followed by 5655 N. High St. in Worthington and 33 Collegeview Road in Westerville, prior to December 1998, when the Association moved to its current home at 13515 Yarmouth Drive in Pickerington, Ohio. Despite the many changes in address, the AMA is still located within about 10 miles of its first Columbus headquarters. CommunicationOver the decades, the AMA has used a variety of publications to effectively communicate with its members on subjects including motorcycle competition, legislative concerns, touring, organized road-riding activities, and public relations campaigns promoting the positive aspects of motorcycling. Early publications that carried FAM, M&ATA, and AMA information included Bicycling World & Motorcycle Review, Motorcycle Illustrated, and American Motorcyclist & Bicyclist, all of which were direct predecessors of The Motorcyclist monthly magazine.

The Motorcyclist existed as “ An Official AMA Publication” through the end of 1942, when editor and AMA field representative Chet Billings left to join the war effort. The leaders of the AMA, learning the lesson of the FAM, recognized that the war posed a serious threat to the organizations existence. With organized motorcycle activities curtailed, and its members spread around the globe, the AMA needed to find a way to keep motorcyclists enthusiastic and looking forward to a post-war return to two wheels. For this reason, the Association began publishing AMA News, a quarterly newsletter that went to all members, including those stationed overseas.

In January 1947 that was followed by the introduction of American Motorcycling, a monthly magazine offered to members for a fee over and above their membership dues. The title changed in July of 1970 to AMA News. Then, starting in July 1976, the decision was made to send AMA News to all members as a part of their member-benefit package. This required an increase in dues, but it gave the Association one major advantage: a way to communicate with every member every month. In September of 1977, the evolution of the magazine was complete with one more change in the name. It became known as American Motorcyclist, and has remained under that title since.

In 1997, the AMA took a step into a new form of communication with the development of World Wide Web site on the Internet. This website, AMADirectlink. com, quickly opened up new opportunities for instant communication with motorcyclists of all types. Today, as the portal to the expansive world of motorcycling, the AMA manages a number of enthusiast-oriented websites under the umbrella URL of www. ama-cycle. org.

ImageSince its inception in 1924, the AMA has been concerned with the public image of motorcycling. Early statements dealt with the safe and responsible operation of vehicles, and particularly with the subject of noise. Concern about the negative effect of exhaust “ cutouts led the Association to develop its “ Muffler Mike campaign in 1948 that invited members to take a pledge for quiet riding. In 1961, a more all-encompassing campaign, titled, “ Put Your Best Wheel Forward went a few steps further.

“ What we are planning, said AMA Director Lin Kuchler, “ is a program to encourage all motorcyclists to present a good appearance to the public–not only by their personal appearance, but also by their riding habits. . . in such measures as safety, mufflers, special consideration of quiet zones, and in many other ways.

Many such campaigns have followed, often developed in cooperation with other motorcycling organizations. These have dealt with responsible use of road and off-road motorcycles. During the summer of 1976, the name of the AMA was changed to the American Motorcyclist Association to better reflect its service to motorcyclists. In 1993, another important milestone was reached when, for the first time, AMA membership topped 200, 000. While membership is one measure of the AMAs strength, the associations diverse member base allows it to advocate on behalf of the estimated 25 million (according to the 2008 Motorcycle Industry Council owner survey) on- and off-road motorcyclists in America.

Organized Road Riding & ActivitiesDuring the early years of motorcycling, small gatherings of motorcyclists evolved into organized road-riding events. A “ Good Fellowship Tour held in 1913 in Milwaukee proved to be immensely popular with the riding public. Following the pattern of the Milwaukee tour, Gypsy Tours were promoted by the FAM and later by the M&ATA. Upon its founding, the AMA inherited the organization of the Gypsy Tours, which became the biggest road-riding events of the year. Gypsy Tours were held on a single weekend throughout the country. They featured a ride to a scenic location for a picnic and various motorcycle competition events. There were often races, including hillclimbs, “ Tourist Trophy (TT) and dirt-track events, along with field meets involving such motorcycle games as slow races, stake races and plank riding. In 1925, 212 individual Gypsy Tours were held on June 20 and 21.

The Motorcycle & Bicycle Illustrated issue of March 19, 1925, stated: “ The Gypsy Tour idea originated eight or nine years ago, the object being to set a certain date. . . for an outing, where riders, dealers and everyone interested in motorcycles would tour to some convenient spot for a days sport and a real old-fashioned good time.

The national organizing groups, the FAM, the M&ATA, and finally the AMA, produced souvenir items for participants in the Gypsy Tours. These items–watch fobs, belt buckles, pins, etc.–have become prized collectors items in recent years. The Gypsy Tours, like nearly all organized motorcycle events, were suspended during World War II. But interest picked up again soon after the wars end. Through the 1950s, though, a small segment of outlaw motorcyclists began to give the Gypsy Tours a bad name. In 1957, the AMA changed direction and gave these events a new identity, along with a new name–AMA Tours. Today, that same line of road-riding events lives on in the District Tours.

That series, the crown jewel of the AMAs organized road-riding program, also includes National and Regional Road Riding Conventions, the National Championship Poker Run Series, District Rallies and, in an echo of history, a series of modern Gypsy Tours. The backbone of that calendar of activities is the AMAs network of chartered clubs, which put on more than 750 road-riding events yearly. The Associations efforts to bolster this network stretch back to the economically depressed 30s, when the AMA initiated a national club-activity contest. These annual contests considered club member mileage, AMA membership percentage, and club appearance as primary contest criteria. The winner of the first national club contest was the Fritzie Roamers Club of Springfield, Massachusetts, in 1934. However, the biggest step the AMA has taken in advancing the interests of road riders took place in 1976 when the Association formally established a separate road-riding program and hired a full-time road-riding development manager. The AMA Road Rep program, which created a network of involved volunteers to facilitate communications between the AMA national office and individual riders, was created in 1977.

It has since grown to encompass both the road and competition sides of the AMA and has been renamed the AMA Field Rep program. AMA CompetitionWhen it was founded in 1924, the American Motorcycle Association had an instant commitment to motorcycle competition. A. B. Coffman, previously the M&ATAs Competition Committee chairman, was named the AMAs first secretary, and he quickly built the AMA into the controlling body ensuring that competition rules would be build around the ideals of safety, fairness and spectator appeal. While two competition events of 1924 were listed as AMA Records in the January 8, 1925, issue of Motorcycle and Bicycle Illustrated, the first full competition year for the AMA was 1925. During that year, 56 race meets were held and 14 national championships were awarded.

The championships were awarded for races of various lengths featuring motorcycles of 30. 5 and 61 cubic inches (500cc and 1, 000cc), as well as sidecars. Through those early years, the premier style of racing in the U. S. was designated Class A, a formula that allowed manufacturers to build exotic one-off racing machines. Under this formula, factory teams spent large sums on racebike development and hired top riders like Jim Davis and Joe Petrali to claim championships. In the early 1930s, though, these expensive factory teams were scaled back as a result of the Depression. To combat this trend, in late 1933 the AMA Competition Committee created Class C, which called for the use of 45 c.

i. (750cc) side-valve and 500cc overhead-valve machines based on stock production components. Only minor modifications were allowed, and fuel was limited to pump gas only. This new class didnt meet with immediate enthusiasm among racers and hard-core fans used to Class A.

In the May 1934 issue of The Motorcyclist, AMA secretary E. C. Smith wrote: “ Last year, the Competition Committee was called everything but a bunch of gentlemen because the Class C rules cramped the style of a few select riders. . . Without a doubt, Class C competition is going to revolutionize motorcycle activities and you are going to see more good riders developing this year than for many a year, and with competition much hotter than ever before. The first national championship race held under the new Class C rules was run on February 22, 1934, in Jacksonville, Florida. Bremen Sykes of Savannah, Georgia, was the winner, completing the 200-mile race in 3 hours, 39 minutes and 3 seconds on a Harley-Davidson.

The national championship moved to Springfield, Illinois, in 1937, where it would remain until the founding of the Grand National Series in 1954. Other key races in the early days of this class included the Daytona 200, first held on the old beach course in 1937, and the Laconia Classic in New Hampshire, which was already a popular annual event when Class C got its start. Meanwhile, on the international front, speedway rider Jack Milne became Americas first world champion, winning the 1937 Individual Speedway Championship in London. All organized motorcycle racing was suspended during World War II, but AMA secretary E.

C. Smith was determined to get the racing program back up to speed quickly as soon as the war ended. In 1946, he hired an ex-Marine motorcycle instructor by the name of Jules Horky to run the competition program, and Horky continued in that position until his retirement in 1974. Dirt-track racing grew in spectator and competitor popularity to become the premier form of American motorcycle racing in the postwar years, and the Grand National Series raised this form of competition to its highest level. The series combined four dirt-track variations–mile, half-mile, short-track and TT steeplechase racing–with road racing to crown the best all-round rider. Grand National racing now ranks as one of the oldest competition series in the world, celebrating its 45th anniversary in 1999. And the unique style of American dirt-tracking that it embodies helped boost American riders to the top levels of world road-racing competition through the late 1970s and into the 80s. Led by Steve Baker and Kenny Roberts, U.

S. riders conquered the world of grand-prix road racing, winning 13 500cc titles in 16 years from 1978 to 1993. In the late 1970s, road racing was given separate championship status by the AMA, and production-based Superbike racing evolved into the premier class. The AMA U. S. Superbike Championship is the proving ground for machines and riders on factory teams representing six motorcycle manufacturers and dozens of privateer efforts. Off-road competition saw a tremendous increase in the 1960s. The development of lightweight motorcycles resulted in heightened enthusiasm for scrambles, enduro riding and desert racing.

In 1961, the AMA approved rules for a new form of racing called moto-cross. Borrowed from postwar Europe, the sport was similar to scrambles and differed only in scoring methods. Motocross and its American offshoot, AMA Supercross, have since grown into the third major professional form of professional motorcycle racing in the U. S. The AMA Supercross Series consistently attracts the largest crowds of any type of American racing, while the AMA U. S. Motocross Championship has set records for spectator attendance in recent years.

As in road racing, American motocross riders proved themselves on the world stage in the 80s, winning the Motocross des Nations, the world championship of team motocross, 13 years straight from 1981 through 1993. And in recent years, the AMA motocross and Supercross series have begun to attract some of the top talent from around the world to compete in this country. What helped make that international success possible was a move by the AMA in the 60s to establish a closer working relationship with the Federation Internationale Motocycliste (FIM), the international sanctioning body for motorcycle competition. In October 1970, the AMA was accepted as the sole U. S. representative to the FIM.

Besides allowing American racers to compete in the world championships, that affiliation made it possible for the U. S. to host world-championship races. The AMA held the International Six Days Trial in 1973, and since, the U. S. has been the site of world-championships in road racing, motocross, observed trials and speedway racing. In 2008, the AMA announced the sale of certain of its AMA Pro Racing properties to the Daytona Motorsports Group (DMG) based in Daytona Beach, Florida.

The move was brought about by the need for the association to place the management of pro racing in the hands of a well resourced motorsports entertainment company. Under the terms of the sale, DMG purchased the sanctioning, promotional and management rights to AMA Pro Racing. Without the burden of pro racing, the AMA was free to refocus its resources on strengthening its amateur racing programs, as well as other member programs, and especially its advocacy for Americas motorcyclists.

Government Relations” Plans are under way to start membership contests and build up the AMA to a live and active fighting organization. . . when this comes to pass, the law-makers will think long and seriously before they attempt to put over anything on the motorcycle riders. (Western Motorcyclist & Bicyclist, May 20, 1924)Concerns about restrictive government action against the motorcycling community were among the primary reasons behind the creation of the AMA. In fact, laws and ordinances threatening the freedom of “ motor bicyclists were the impetus for the creation of many early motorcycling clubs and organizations. As an announcement in August 1903, before the creation of the Federation of American Motorcyclists (FAM), stated: “ The particular character of the motor bicycle has left its status open to various definitions, and as a result.

. . laws applying to big motor cars are brought to bear on motorcycles with oppressive force. . .

To combat such measures, to insist that the highways are free to all alike, and that the right to use them is irrevocable, is one of the objects to be served by organization. It is an object that should appeal to every motorcyclist with red blood in his veins.” It wasnt until a rash of legislation in the 1960s, though, that motorcycling organizations began to realize how important legislative activity would become to the future of the sport. At that time, the MS&ATA (Motor Scooter & Allied Trades Association) began to concentrate on government relations efforts on behalf of the motorcycle industry, while the AMA saw the need to focus on laws and regulations threating to riders.

This led to the formation of the AMAs Legislative Department, with a mission to “. . . coordinate national legal activity against unconstitutional and discriminatory laws against motorcyclists, to serve as a sentinel on federal and state legislation affecting motorcyclists, and to be instrumental as a lobbying force for motorcyclists and motorcycling interests.

For the road rider, the AMA Legislative Department (since renamed the Government Relations Department) has spent the decades since wrestling with national, state and local legislation in such areas as mandatory helmet use, bike bans and rider-education programs. There have been notable successes, including the lifting of bike bans in St. Louis and Brockton, Massachusetts, and the development and implementation of self-funded rider-education courses in 45 states. On the off-road side, the AMA has consistently fought to protect reasonable access to public land for trail riders. This issue has taken on greater importance with the introduction of wilderness legislation in many states over the past decade.

Recognizing the growing need for direct involvement in the nations capital, in 1991 the Government Relations Department opened a satellite office in Washington, D. C. That was followed in 1994 by the opening of a second satellite office–in Los Angeles–to provide on-the-spot support for West-Coast issues. To enlist the aid of AMA members in this effort, the Legislative Supporter Program was initiated in 1978. This fund-raising campaign continues to generate money dedicated solely to the Associations government relations efforts. In addition, the Association created a new category of involvement for dedicated members willing to go the extra mile for motorcycling. These Extra Mile Members voluntarily pay higher dues each year to help support essential AMA programs.

The AMA Motorcycle Hall of Fame MuseumWhen the AMA was founded, motorcycling was a recent invention, with only about 20 years of history in the U. S. As motorcycling and the AMA have aged, however, its leaders have recognized the need to create a museum to preserve the history of motorcycling in America. However, tax regulations and budgetary constraints prevented the AMA from developing any concrete plans for a museum until 1981, when AMA Executive Director Lin Kuchler studied the museum idea, assisted by Ed Youngblood, then serving as the Associations director of government relations. Together, they identified the need for a tax-exempt organization, separate from the AMA, to accomplish the goal of creating a motorcycle museum. Plans were developed for such an organization, which became known as the American Motorcycle Heritage Foundation. A major milestone was reached in late 1982 when the IRS granted the AMHF tax-exempt status as a public-education foundation. The first trustees of the AMHF as elected by the AMA Board were: Bill Baird of Sterling, Illinois; Hazel Kolb of New London, Missouri; Dick Raczuk of Canoga Park, California; and Dal Smilie of Helena, Montana.

Ed Youngblood, who had since become executive director of the AMA, was appointed as the AMHFs administrative vice president. One of the first tasks facing the AMHF was to develop a funding base. The first fund-raising program by the AMHF, in 1983, involved the sale of commemorative envelopes bearing motorcycle stamps for a $10 contribution. At the heart of the AMHFs preservation efforts was the creation of a world-class national museum of motorcycling. To support these efforts, Kuchler was appointed director of resources of the AMHF in March 1984. Numerous issues were considered concerning space requirements and site locations for a museum. On November 10, 1985, at an AMHF fund-raising dinner in Anaheim, California, in conjunction with the celebration of the centennial of motorcycling, trustees announced that the museum would be located at the AMAs headquarters in Ohio.

This location featured proximity to major transportation centers, and a significant percentage of the U. S. population was within a 500-mile radius. During 1986 and 1987, numerous facility studies and proposals were considered, Meanwhile, the AMA was able to purchase its previously rented headquarters building and adjacent property. This enabled the AMHF Board to consider the option of designing and constructing a separate museum building or developing exhibit space within the existing AMA office building. Eventually, the decision was made to proceed with the latter option, and renovation of the AMA office was undertaken, providing about 7, 000 square feet for the museum and its offices. By 1989, plans were definite enough for the AMA and the AMHF to announce a grand opening date in late summer of 1990.

Also in 1989, two full-time staff positions were developed for the AMHF. During the planning and development stages of the museum, the project depended heavily upon support from the Antique Motorcycle Club of America. In 1988, the AMHF added two seats to its board of trustees to be filled by appointed representatives of the AMC. This formal relationship has encouraged further financial and promotional support by the AMC and provides valuable technical and historical guidance. It also helped facilitate the regular loans of significant privately owned motorcycles for the museums exhibits. In 1989, AMA Life Members Mike and Margaret Wilson commissioned a special work of art for the museum.

The resulting three-quarter life-size sculpture, crafted by California artist Steve Posson, depicts former motorcycle racer and AMA race official Jim Davis on a 1919 Indian racing machine. Upon its completion in early 1990, the statue, entitled “ The Glory Days, was exhibited during a six-month nationwide tour which generated a tremendous amount of support for the museum project. The statue then was put on display in the shared lobby of the AMA offices and the space that would become the museum. On August 16, 1990, the longtime vision of preserving motorcycling history became a reality when the Motorcycle Heritage Museum officially opened its doors to over 4, 000 motorcycle enthusiasts and dignitaries gathered for the occasion. The inaugural exhibits focused on “ Women in Motorcycling and “ Decades of Development, which showcased over 80 antique and classic motorcycles. The museums philosophy of regularly changing its theme exhibits has resulted in a succession of displays, including, “ Those Fabulous Fours, “ Fifty Years of the Daytona 200, “ World Class Americans, “ 90 Years of Harley-Davidson, “ My First Bike, “ Excelsior: The Lost Legends, and “ You Meet the Nicest People. In December 1998, the Motorcycle Heritage Museum shut down in Westerville with the AMAs move out of that office building. In June 1999, a new 26, 000-square-foot facility, to be known as the AMA Motorcycle Hall of Fame Museum, opened at the AMAs new location in Pickerington, Ohio.

That building greatly expanded the museums exhibit space and opened with an exhibit titled “ 75 Years of Excitement, timed to coincide with the AMAs Diamond Anniversary. Later anchor exhibits included “ A Century of Indian” and “ Heroes of Harley-Davidson,” “ Motocross America,” and “ Motostars: Celebrities + Motorcycles.” Smaller exhibits showcased a host of personalities from the world of motorcycling, including Craig Vetter, Dick Mann, Malcolm Smith and Arlen Ness, along with milestone bits of history, such as “ BSAs Greatest Daytona,” “ Dawn of the Superbike” and “ BMW, Mastery of Speed.” The AMA today and beyondIn the 85 years since its founding in 1924, the AMA has evolved from a national club into the only national organization devoted to serving all of Americas motorcyclists. From a part-time staff of one, it has grown to include many dedicated full-time employees and a host of volunteers all working for the betterment of motorcycling. Today, the American Motorcyclist Association is the largest member-based advocacy organization in the world, and it actively serves its mission to promote the motorcycle lifestyle and protect the future of motorcycling for generations to come.