



WEST WINDSOR HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER



Ascutney Lodge view from south side

Changes to West Windsor in 2015

Some subtle changes, which really do have an impact on the history of West Windsor, often go unnoticed by us and all too often go unrecorded for many reasons. Such changes include those to our buildings through demolition, fire, storm damage, and changes in use or simply by renovation of a building.

In recent months we have had the dramatic fire that ruined the base lodge at Ascutney Mountain Resort. The lodge building will likely be demolished and gone with it will be all the excitement of numerous events, countless memories, and the symbol of skiing at Ascutney.

We have recently viewed what years of hard winter weather with its snow and cold and rain and freezing does to our porches. The long screened-in porch on the Harrington home on Harrington

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Harrington Home

Spring Barbecue, Sunday, May 17, 2015



Hailey Berrio & Sadie Gravelle True to Brownsville's historic bean suppers, we enjoyed lots of helping hands and satisfied guests while raising funds to support both organizations. Thank you to everyone who attended! ❖

On a warm, sunny, spring day, WWHS and SCIP came together to celebrate our annual spring barbecue.



Thatcher, David & Carson Jaacks



Bill Stillson, Courtney McKaig, Mark Aldrich, Terry Shearer

Calendar of Events

Look for more details on our website and on Facebook

Museum & Historic Records

*Open Most Tuesdays
10 a.m - noon 802-484-7474*

Homecoming Weekend

*Village of Brownsville
July 3- July 4*

WWHS Annual Meeting

*Story Memorial Hall
Sunday, October 18, 2015
4PM*

WWHS 2015 Fall Newsletter

December 2015

Vermont History Expo

*Tunbridge Fairgrounds
June 2016*

THE MILLS OF WEST WINDSOR

I'm a "wonderer." As I wander along back roads or in the woods, I see traces of past times and wonder what those old dams or foundations were used for. My colleague at the museum, Jane Stillson, was also interested. So we did a little poking around the records of the historical society and found a rich history of industry in our small town, including the answers to a few of the old sites I'd wondered about. The result was the current special exhibit on the Mills of West Windsor at the WWHS Museum and the information in this newsletter. Enjoy! ~Karen Diop

The Brownsville Village Mills

In the late 1700s, Stephen Cady had a sawmill with an up and down saw on Mill Brook. While we're not really sure where the mill was, or the dam that ran this mill, we know he also had a joiner and shoe shop on Beaver Brook (running behind the school and town hall) before it met Mill Brook. Cady's mill and shops served that part of the West Parish that was close to the mountain.

In 1833 Asaph Lumbar sold Pierce Hulett the right to build a dam across Mill Brook at the west end of the village of Brownsville, about where Seems Road starts. This mill turned out lumber from the time it was built to when it shut down in the mid-1930s. Lumber was sawed and wood products turned out for over 100 years by Pierce Hulett/Hewlett, William Chamberlin, Ira Small and four generations of Sykes men. Up the brook some thousand feet a log dam held back the mill pond and a canal brought the water that powered the mill-saw. Jacob and Wilbert Skypes installed a more modern and efficient circular saw and introduced steam power to make the mill independent of the water levels. The Sykes began turning out thousands of pieces of hardwood chair stock which went to the furniture factories of Boston, as well as items for local residents. The Historical Society has several items in

its museum. The mill grew and sprawled along the brook, with a shingle mill, two lath mills, a drying room and tumble mill. It went out of business during the depression. There's no visible trace left of the mill today.

The Harrington Rd – Route 44 Mills

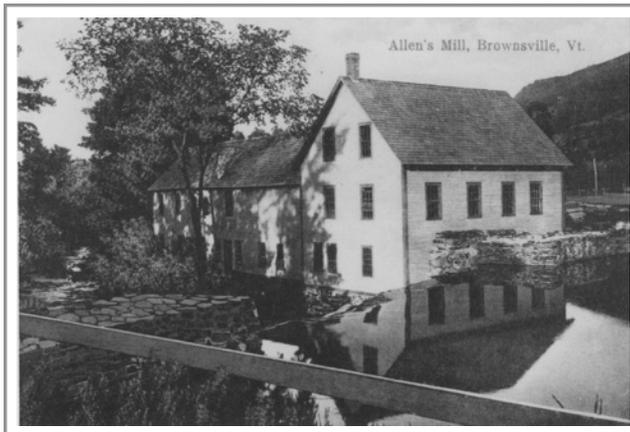
Just west of the Sykes mill location there is visible reminder of the next complex of mills, in the form of a deteriorating cement dam visible from Harrington Rd. This was the site of a larger dam and mill pond that powered some type of operation for over 125 years – the longest operating water powered mill in West Windsor.



Nutting/Allen Mills Site - Now

Abel Nutting's carding and fulling mill started in the early 1800s, providing an alternative to hand carding wool for the many sheep owners in West Windsor at that time. The mill, in one way or another, handled wool from thousands of local sheep for over 50 years. Levi Walker, advertised it for sale in 1846, describing the property as a "Woolen Factory for Sale called the Nutting Factory, consisting of a factory building with carding machines, fixtures, etc., a good house and barn and about six acres of land. A new water wheel recently installed." By the 1880s it was owned by Ira Small, who had reworked it as a grist mill and a cider mill, and in 1895, Ethan Allen bought the mill buildings and the fine clapboard house close by. About 1900 he replaced the old log dam with a stone dam.

Ethan Allen made the mill into a self-serve operation. He ran the power and the farmers carried their grant or corn to the mill, poured it into the hopper to be pulverized while Allen controlled the flow of water for the right type of milling. Once the grist was mixed and ground, the farmers would bag up the finished product and pay the miller. When Allen expanded the enterprise to include a sawmill running off the same water power, it ran the same



Nutting/Allen Mills Site - Then

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THE MILLS OF WEST WINDSOR *(Continued from page 2)*

way – folks put the wood in one end and picked up the planks at the other. In the fall, he used steam power to press cider and later boiled down cider for apple jelly.

Ethan Allen also used these facilities to create the first electricity for the village of Brownsville in October 1911. When he was awake and operating the mill, the electricity was on. When he went to bed, lights out. Frank Gibson bought the operation in 1930, continuing to use the water for power until the dam was washed out in a 1935 flood. This was the end of the last waterpower dam and mill on the Millbrook. Gibson continued to run the lumber mill for a while using a gas engine.

The Mills of Westgate/Bowers Bridge

Records show that there was a store, school and mills near Bowers Bridge, further west along the Mill Brook. The school is still there. The store is gone, but you can still see the traces of those long ago mills.

In spring of 1791, Caleb Williston, a tanner from Springfield, advertised his new business at this location “about 50 rods south of West Parish Meeting House” (then in Sheddsville). In addition to tanning hides to order, he also carried leather, a few pairs of boots and shoes, bridles, and sleigh harnesses which he exchanged for hides or country produce. Thomas Cooper and later Joel Ely operated grist (grinding) and oil mills in this area. The

substantial stonework of the dam and mill foundations, together with the sluiceway canal, can still be seen west of Bowers Bridge, as you walk along Westgate Road. The water of the canal ran from the millpond along the side of the road, carrying water to the tannery and oil mill on the flat, between the dam and bridge.

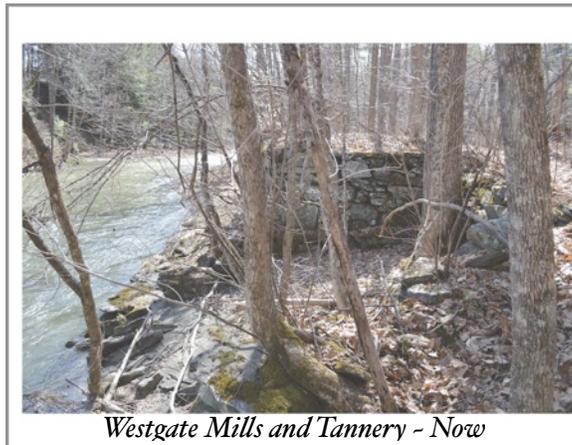
Water rights, home and industries on these locations were bought by Adolpheus Pierce who ran the grist mill, oil mill and tanning operation. He sold them in 1841 to John McCullough, who built the 2 ½ story brick house overlooking the enterprises in 1847. The mills closed around 1890.

Perkins Woolen Mill on Brook Road

In the early 1930s, Josiah Perkins – who had a woolen mill in the east parish – established a woolen mill just west of the parish boundary on Mill Brook. His 1831 mortgage says the mill had 180 spindles and four looms that ran on the water of the brook pouring through a canal. Within a year they were turning out more than 25,000 yards of “soft medium weight plain and fancy cassimere”. The Perkins family ran it for two generations of owners and five of Josiah’s sons had their homes on the brook road between Brownsville and the mill. As the demand for superior grade wool lessened, the mill switched to producing “fine flannel”, socks and stockings. The knitting machines produced hundreds of pairs of “half hose” that were sent out to local women for hand knitting the heels and toes that finished off the socks. Perkins had some trouble getting women to meet its high standards.

In 1880, the mill was sold to Samuel H Leland and name changed from Perkins to the Windsor Woolen Mills. They started turning out carpets on the looms as well. The high wooden building caught fire and burned in 1884, the damage recorded at \$10,000. All trace of the mill and its dam seems to have disappeared. Florence Van Dusen remembered the remains of the mill, as it had fallen into the brook. She says the mill was “right on the edge of the mowing near Mr. Moore’s house, before you

get to the dance hall. It’s over from the brook – over this way from the road.” ❖



Westgate Mills and Tannery - Now

Mills Out By the Reading Line

West Windsor has had a number of blacksmith shops in its time, but only one furnace that actually produced iron as well as products made from that iron (at least, only one that we’re aware of). The iron furnace was located on the Mill Brook just under a mile from the Reading – West Windsor town line. Although not technically a mill, the water diverted from the Mill Brook by a dam was critical to turn the water wheel that operated the bellows needed to keep the furnace at temperatures to

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CHANGES TO WEST WINDSOR (Continued from page 1)

Road suffered such damage. That porch was enjoyed by generations and was almost as old as the house. The unsound porch was recently removed by the owner before further costly damage would be done to the main building.



Webster House (before)



Webster Property (after)

On Coon Club Road, the well-known Webster Home was demolished earlier this spring after the new owners of the property, who live nearby, determined the house simply was beyond saving. The lot has now been returned to fields and

pastures with their beautiful views of Mount Ascutney to the south.



Former Hilts Home

Over on Cemetery Road, west of the intersection with Cow Shed Trail Road, just as you



Alexander Home

enter Sheddsville, on the left side of the road is the Thomas home, (later known as the Harriet Hilts horse farm). Recent new owners of the property are keeping the beautiful horse barn and stalls. Once again there will be horses around the property. But because the attached home was in poor shape, the new owners are working on a complete renovation of the interior of the home. The famous façade of the home remains intact.

Also at numerous homes, like the Smith home just up the road from the Brownsville Cemetery, the owners are repairing that home's front porch for the next generation to enjoy.

We have seen the old talc processing plant renovated to a modern wood pellet producing plant.

A change of use has turned a page in the history of West Windsor.

Then recently, since the two dangerous 150 plus year old maples were taken down near the home of Wesley and Joyce Alexander on Rush Meadow Road, their rustic rural property with its beautiful fields and views has taken on an even more "Vermont Life" appearance.

More changes are coming to the village of Brownsville with the installation of the septic line to Windsor. However, changes should not be feared but even subtle changes should be recorded. Your West Windsor Historical Society is attempting to record some of these subtle changes. ~ Tom Kenyon



THIRD GRADE DONATION OF LOCAL IMPORTANCE

The interim 3rd grade teacher, Ms. Davis, enlisted the children in an oral history project this past spring. The children have donated a signed copy of interviews they conducted with some of our local townspeople. We would like to extend a hearty thank you to each and everyone who contributed to the compilation and production of this book! ❖

HISTORIC RECORDS REPORT

We are continuing to record our stacks of photos and Jane Stillson has been scanning them. We have also started to number the pages in our genealogy books which will then be scanned and inserted into heavy duty sheet protectors and placed in new binders.

Volunteers: Hats off to Elizabeth Burrows Katrina Hill, and Martha Hunt who have volunteered to help with several projects. With the absence of Fran Cady in the Records Office, things have been piling up, so I met with Katrina to show her what Frances has been doing -- collecting obituaries and news items pertinent to West Windsor, indexing and filing them. Katrina is a school librarian and felt she could start doing this as soon as school is out.

Elizabeth Burrows and Martha Hunt both have a journalism background. Jane, Karen, Ava and I have met with Elizabeth and we're very excited about her conducting interviews with various townspeople. We haven't met with Martha, but she has indicated that she will do interviews as well. We would like to video the interviews in digital format or tape them as an audio file.

Third Grade Oral history project - we have been given a copy signed by all the Albert Bridge third grade students of their interviews with some of the townspeople. Jane and I were among those interviewed.

Album Quilt: Cathy Lee Ludlum of Hart Times Trading Post in Denton, Texas, sent a picture of a quilt she purchased from an antique store near Spofford Lake in Chesterfield, New Hampshire. The names on it were of people from Ascutneyville and West Windsor. The West Windsor names were Mrs. Eben Burnham, Mrs. Charles F. Cady, Elsie A. Burnham (?) and Flora Burnham. Our records show that Mrs. Burnham was Susan N. Lewis, September 16, 1821-April 7, 1885 and Mrs. Cady was Sarah M. Huey, October 17, 1826-October 21, 1918. No record of the other two. I'm assuming they were young ladies as there was no "Mrs." by their names.



House at 43 Duling Road: We had a request from Lorie Komlyn, a graduate student working on a Masters degree in Building History at the University of Cambridge. She chose to do a recording project on a specific building which is the Paul and Marie Schroeder house, now owned by Ian and Ann Barribal. I did not find any pictures, but sent her a map of West Windsor and a copy of land records pertaining to that area.

If you would like to volunteer an hour or two over the summer scanning photographs or documents, please contact me us at 802-484-7474. Thank you!

- Mary Jane Wentworth

6TH GRADE STUDENTS RECEIVE THEIR COMPLIMENTARY MEMBERSHIP



Mr. Butler's 6th grade historians

During the last week of school, Tom Kenyon presented each sixth grade student with a complimentary West Windsor Historical Society membership card in honor of their hard work and to celebrate their graduation. Congratulations! We wish you all the best! ❖



Mr. Butler's 6th grade comedians.

**IN MEMORY OF OUR
FRIENDS AND NEIGHBORS
WHO HAVE PASSED AWAY**

*For the purpose of historical and genealogical research, the West Windsor Historical Society would like to note the West Windsor connections from local area obituaries. Any omissions are unintended. Please let me know if there is someone who should be listed.
~ Mary Jane Wentworth*

Donald H. Balch (May 2, 1946 – December 24, 2014) was born in Rutland, Vermont, the son of Harvey and Edna Balch. He grew up on a farm in Brownsville, the youngest of seven children. He is survived by his wife, Becky, daughter Katrina Hill of Brownsville, his son, Greg Balch of Hartland, siblings, Katherine Blanchard, Blythe Shockley, George Balch, and seven grandchildren. He was predeceased by his parents, a son, Jeffrey Balch, a brother, Ivan Balch, and sisters, Joyce Harlow and Abby Slocum. Donald was a brick and stone mason and a Viet Nam War veteran.

Susan Bazaar (June 13, 1944 - Feb. 16, 2013) was the daughter of Harold and Ruth (Holbrook) Esty. Survivors include two sons, Jeffrey Bazaar and Dale Bazaar; a daughter, Jacqueline Thomas; seven siblings, Edward, Richard, Gerald, Wendall, David, Nancy Mosher, and Ruth Smith; and five grandchildren. She was predeceased by two brothers, William and Henry Esty. Susan was employed at Windsor Minerals in Brownsville and later at the U.S. Postal Service in White River Junction.

Cyrus Brush (March 20, 1953 – January 22, 2015) died at his residence in Titusville, Florida. For many years he lived in Reading and Woodstock. He had his own

business, called Brush Services, that encompassed chimney sweeping, pool maintenance and installation of residential and commercial alarm systems. He is survived by his son Martin Haut and four siblings, Michael Brush, Jonathan Brush, Didi Brush and Tony Brush. Cy was predeceased by his father Cyrus Brush and his mother Georgianna Brush died four days after Cy at her home in Lexington, Virginia.

Elizabeth B. Cross (October 16, 1937 – January 27, 2014) was the daughter of Eugene and Elinor (Edson) Blackington. She is survived by her husband, Oscar, and five daughters, Cathy Conley, Lori Hood, Coleen George, and twins Kelly Hacker and Karla Harrington; three brothers, Brian, Leland, and Robert Blackington; three sisters, Barbara Blackington, Dale Beaulieu, and Karen Hurlburt; thirteen grandchildren and twelve great-grandchildren. She was predeceased by her parents and one brother, Alan Blackington. Betty retired from Mt. Ascutney Hospital and Health Center in 2002, where she was a nurses aide and later a unit secretary.

Beverly Fontaine (March 30, 1928 – October 12, 2013) was born in Boston and grew up in Brownsville, Vermont, the daughter of Deane and Eliza (Best) Parker. She was predeceased by her husband, Norman, and her sister, Lois Markwell, and is survived by her children Nancy Pritchard, Gary Fontaine, and Wendy Lary; eight grandchildren and twelve great-grandchildren.

Gail Furnas (August 12, 1921 – December 18, 2014 of Hoover, Alabama. Gail and her husband Howard were long-time residents of West Windsor. Their home was on the Sheddsville Cemetery Road.

Ashley Gravelle (December 14, 1970 – March 9, 2014) was born in Manhasset, NY and grew up in Long Island and later in Pittsburgh, PA. After college Ashley returned to her family home in Cavendish where she opened River Roost Bagel Company, then moved on to become Director of Education at Springbrook Farm. In 2003, Ashley co-founded Keepers Restaurant in Reading and worked at The Edge Fitness Center at Mt. Ascutney Resort. Survivors include her husband Jason, and children Sadie Morgan and Chase Egan of Brownsville; her mother Ali of Reading and father Sterling of Greensboro, NC; one sister, Kelly Lilly, and one brother Sterling Jr. Ashley fought a courageous battle with cancer.

Warren F. "Joel" Hale (February 21, 1936 – December 3, 2013) was born in West Windsor, the son of Ferris W. and Emily (Housechild) Hale. He worked on the family dairy farm in West Windsor all of his life. He was predeceased by his parents and one brother, Ferris Wesley Hale. His sister, Maria Hale, survives him.

Frederic A. Jenks died at the age of 98 on April 1, 2014. He was born in Lakewood, Ohio and grew up in the Boston, Mass. Area. An MIT graduate, he worked at National Union Radio Corp, Sperry Gyroscope Co., and, while at Raytheon Co. was a consultant to the Air Force Advisory Board for eight years. Locally he was president of the West Windsor, Vt. Historical Society for two years, did computer work for the town of Brownsville, and was active in church affairs. He was predeceased by his wife, Helen, and is survived by his three daughters, Darby Mumford, Patricia L. Jenks, and Joan A. Wright, as well as many grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

Erla I. Olney (April 24, 1918 – January 13, 2015) was the daughter of Clyde and Marion (Dana) Hastings. She graduated from Windsor High School and attended the Concord Business School. She was predeceased by her husband, Harry Olney, her youngest child, Eric, her brother Rodney Hastings, and her son-in-law, Sammy Pierce. She is survived by her children Gary Olney, Rita Olney Pierce, and Glenn Olney, nine grandchildren and 18 great-grandchildren. Erla and Harry started the Harry F. Olney Realty real estate business in Springfield in 1945 and they were active in the Springfield Association of Special Needs Children and the Brandon Training School.

John Pedrick (June 16, 1943 – August 8, 2014) was born in Norristown, Pennsylvania, the son of D. Webster and Virginia Cox Pedrick. He received his education at Bates College and the University of Pennsylvania. He served as President of Independent Schools

Association of Rhode Island and was a Director of the Association of Independent Schools of New England. He loved to travel and retired to Brownsville. He is survived by his wife, Nancy; two sons, Chandler Pedrick, and Webster Pedrick, two granddaughters, Samantha and Alexa Pedrick, and two brothers Daniel W. Pedrick and David R. Pedrick; one sister Ginger Searle, and foster brother David Carey.

Howard Smith (November 26, 1928 – January 10, 2015) was born in Windsor, Vermont and died at his home in Las Vegas, Nev. Howard retired from Cone Automatic in 1987 where he worked as a master electrician and superintendent of the facility for over 25 years. He was an active volunteer for the West Windsor Fire Department and served on the West Windsor Board of Selectmen. He was predeceased by his wife Maxine (Warren), his parents Burt E. Smith and Esther Cook Smith, and his sister Gertrude McGuire.

He is survived by his daughters, Nancy Issa and Brenda Manfre, of Las Vegas; and a son Gregory Smith of Ascutney, Vt.; three grandchildren and a step-grandson; sister Velma Knox of Massachusetts and brother, Lyman Smith of Connecticut.

Carlisle Spencer (September 29, 1948 – May 22, 2014) was born in Newburyport, Massachusetts, the son of Carlisle T. Spencer, Sr. and Molly Van Wyck Spencer. He had an associate's degree from the culinary Institute of America and a BS degree in Hotel Restaurant Management. His job experience was varied and he is remembered locally as the driver of Woodstock's electric trolley. Carlisle had a deep appreciation for nature and maintained a four mile trail in the woods behind his house in Brownsville. He is survived by his mother, Molly Spencer, his sister, Jane Spencer, both of Brownsville; and Henry and Maureen Spencer of Effingham, NH. ❖

THE MILLS OF WEST WINDSOR *(Continued from page 3)*

produce iron. In 1818 this furnace was owned and operated by Jiry Hammond, who smelted iron, did blacksmithing and build the cast iron stoves, plows, and other pieces needed by his neighbors. The company went bankrupt in 1850. The water rights and dam was later bought by Zenas Sanders, who used the power for a wheel horse rake factory and cider mill. Right close to the Reading line was a grist mill operated by America Amsden until his death.

Willow Brook / Rush Meadow Mills

The junction of Rush Meadow (Willowbrook) and Sheddsville (Great) Roads held a cluster of industries that earned it the name "Shop Hollow". In the early 1800s a young man of 18, Daniel Read, ran a substantial sawmill and later a gristmill here that was operating until at least 1869. A little down the Willow Brook from Read's place was the Pierce-Hyde sawmill. The Pinney Mill took over this location and operated for a few years in the early 1900s. Charley

Gibson worked for Pinney before he took over Ethan Allen's mill in town.

Oil Mill on the Brownsville-Hartland Road

Oil Mill Bridge (off the Hartland Rd near Hammond Hill Rd) is the site of a mill that once pressed flax seed with crude screw presses. In 1810 It was one of 26 oil mills in the state. The mill was operated at the turn of the 19th century by Langdon and North (1798), later sold to Bezeleel Bridge in 1827. Notes of oral histories at the historical society say that Dwight Hammond rebuilt the oil mill dam for Judge Charles Sherman, who lived in the old Howland house. It wasn't used for anything except ice and eventually was washed out again in a flash flood.

Visit the museum for more information and photo exhibit. ❖

WWHS OFFICERS 2015

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ASSISTANT TREASURER	MARY JANE WENTWORTH (2015)
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WWHS DIRECTORS

2015:	JENNIFER BODNAR, KAREN DIOP, COURTNEY MCKAIG
2016:	JANE STILLSON, BILL STILLSON
2017:	WESLEY ALEXANDER, LEONE BUSHKIN, NANCY LOUX, MARY JANE WENTWORTH

BOOK PROJECT

After retiring from Albert Bridge School, skilled photographer Ava Emerson has worked many long hours on her project to digitize the photographs of Brownsville people and their activities which she took nearly forty years ago. Her vision was to document our small Vermont town and these pictures were a photo essay created as part of our bicentennial year celebration. Ava is in the final stages of creating a book containing the faces and scenes of our beloved town in a bygone era for the West Windsor Historical Society.

Thank you for all the generous donations, which contribute to the printing of this newsletter. If you have sent in a donation, but do not see your name above, it will be applied to future printings. We acknowledge sponsorship chronologically and appreciate your donations and continued support.

If you would like to make a donation to the printing of this newsletter, please send a check to: **WWHS, PO Box 12, Brownsville, VT 05037. Memo: Newsletter**

**Spring Newsletter
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