



Olmsted 200

Two Centuries and More History of Olmsted Falls and Olmsted Township –
First Farmed in 1814 and Settled in 1815

Issue 132

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Contents

Film Goes “Here and There about the Village”	1
Man Recalls Helping Change the Map of Olmsted	4
Village Green Got Greener 140 Years Ago	9
“Windmills of Holland” Turned 100 Years Ago in Olmsted	10
Eclipse Awes Spectators in Olmsted	12
Still to Come	14

Film Goes “Here and There about the Village”

The 1936 film of Olmsted Falls that now has a soundtrack of music and commentary added by Jim Boddy provides many interesting glimpses into what life was like in the community in those days of the Great Depression when World War II was still a few years away. During its first half, the film shows the festivities at the village’s 15th annual homecoming, various businesses and the people who worked at them, and a staged demonstration of how the volunteer fire department would have fought a fire with its lone vehicle, a 1928 Whippet.

Following that, the filmmaker presents two series of scenes identified with a title card – “Here and there about the village” – with white letters on a dark background. Those series include quick shots of people tending to their regular activities, sometimes acknowledging the camera, sometimes not.

During those sections, Amelia and Clara Harding, whose commentary Boddy recorded in 1991, seemed less able to identify the people who quickly



This is the first shot in the first “here and there” section of the film. It looks as though the woman is sitting in a garage or storage shed, but it’s hard to say where it was.



This shot of a woman walking toward a parking lot shows several automobiles of the 1930s.

appear and then just as quickly disappear, and when they do offer a name, it's hard to match it with specific persons because the film moves so quickly. But even if the names of those people aren't clear, the shots are still interesting because of the fashions the people wear and the appearances of the vehicles and places behind them. Perhaps *Olmsted 200* readers can help with some identifications.

garage or storage shed. Where it was located is not clear.

The first "here and there" section begins with a shot of a woman sitting in what looks like a

The next shot shows a woman walking into a parking lot (location unknown) and includes several automobiles that were common in the 1930s.



On the left are three women who were walking arm-in-arm along a sidewalk until they notice the camera and turn away from it. On the right is a boy who shows disdain for the camera.

Following that are shots of a few people along a sidewalk in what looks like downtown Olmsted Falls. First are three young women with short haircuts who were camera shy. They turn their faces away from the camera as they approach it. Next is a young boy who was neither afraid of the camera nor welcoming of it. He sticks his tongue out at it.

The ensuing shots show people exiting the Olmsted Community Church, seemingly following a Sunday morning service based on the nice clothes they wore. That wasn't the current Community Church building, which was constructed about two decades later, but the building that now is designated as the Grand Pacific Wedding Chapel. In two of those shots, the background shows the metal bridge built in the early

1900s over Plum Creek that eventually was replaced in 1998 by the covered wooden structure known as the Charles A. Harding Memorial Bridge. One shot of Gilbert Hall (1889-1976) of River Road also shows what looks like an empty lot across the street where the sanctuary of the new Olmsted Community Church would be built in the 1950s.

That series of shots finishes with one of five women on what looks like a balcony or a landing for a stairway, perhaps at the church.



On the upper left, a young woman walks out of the Olmsted Community Church. On the upper right, a man leaves the church with the bridge over Plum Creek in the background. In the center left, a woman poses briefly for the camera near the church's sign. In the center right, Gilbert Hall departs from the church with the bridge in the background, as well as an empty lot across the street where a new church would be built. On the lower left, five women pose for the camera.

The next issue of *Olmsted 200* will include shots from the second “here and there” series in the 1936 film. Those who want to see the film will get their chance soon in

public screenings scheduled by Jim Boddy for June 2 at 2:00 p.m. and June 3 at 6:30 p.m. at the Olmsted Falls branch of the Cuyahoga County Public Library.

Man Recalls Helping Change the Map of Olmsted

When Americans think of big elections, their memories tend to focus on those held in November. That's when presidents, governors, members of Congress and other high officials are chosen. Spring elections, while important, tend to be less memorable. But one spring election more than half a century ago had quite memorable effects on the Olmsted community. It literally changed the map.



On May 5, 1970, the voters of Olmsted Falls and West View chose to combine the two small villages into one municipality that soon became a city. The story of the Olmsted Falls-West View merger is told in Issue 92 of *Olmsted 200* from January 2021, but more recently, a man who was directly involved in helping that merger to occur has stepped forward to share his memories.

This is what Norman/Ron Sherbert looked like several decades ago when he was active in municipal government and changing the map of southwestern Cuyahoga County.

His name is Norman Sherbert, but many people know him as Ron. His father's first name also was Norm, so his family and friends referred to him by his middle name as he was growing up in Detroit and through his college years. But after college, he figured he should use his first name professionally.

"Half the people I know call me Ron and the other half call me Norm," he said in an interview with *Olmsted 200*. "It doesn't make any difference."

No matter what you call him, Sherbert, who is now 86 years old, is among relatively few people who are still around with participants' knowledge of how Olmsted Falls and West View (sometimes written as Westview) got together. He now is a resident of Evergreen, Colorado, and lives half of the year in Florida.

Sherbert came to northeastern Ohio in 1960 after graduating from General Motors Institute. He took a job with General Motors at Cleveland Hopkins Airport. Back then, GM was designing, testing and building armored vehicles – tanks – at its facility at the airport. Newly married, Sherbert and his wife initially lived in a little cabin along Lake Erie in Bay Village. A year later, they moved into a condominium in Rocky River near the edge of the Metroparks' Emerald Necklace. They stayed there for two years.

In about 1963, they bought a house on Lantern Drive, just off Lindbergh Boulevard, in West View. But Sherbert wasn't happy with his new community.

"We were paying pretty high taxes...not getting much service, and I decided to start attending the [village] council meetings," he said. "They were poorly run. The mayor was [Carl] Sprague. Sprague Road was named after his family."

Sherbert didn't like how Sprague and another council member who lived on Lindbergh Boulevard ran the council and generally did what they wanted to do.

"I decided that I couldn't live there without becoming active, so I decided to run against the guy that lived on Lindbergh," he said. "And I walked the total village of West View – every door – and was elected and beat him handily."



This is a recent photo of Sherbert, who turned 86 in January.

A few more times, Sherbert was re-elected. "At that same time that I ran, another gentleman who had been attending the council meetings and was not pleased with the way things were going was Allan Mills. Allan and I were elected at the same time, and our attitude and philosophy were pretty much in concert, and so we became really good friends."

Another man who took an active interest in West View, Jan Castora, eventually joined them on the village council. The three of them – Sherbert, Mills and Castora – worked well together, and that was important when the prospect of merger came about.

Those years of the late 1960s were filled with many attempts to change the map of southwestern Cuyahoga County, but they mostly were proposals to annex all or parts of Olmsted Township to neighboring municipalities. Olmsted Falls and West View both were involved, as were North Olmsted, Berea and eventually Brook Park.

Early in 1969, several annexation efforts broke out. One would have annexed all the township to West View (which then would have surrounded Olmsted Falls). Three others would have annexed portions of the township to Berea. Another would have attached part of the township to North Olmsted. Meanwhile, some people started a petition drive to get people who had signed the petition to annex all the township to West View to nullify their signatures.

In April 1969, a *Plain Dealer* reporter wrote, “Somewhere in Cleveland there is a balding, white-haired map-maker who bursts into tears every time he sees another annexation petition from Olmsted Township, Olmsted Falls or Westview Village.”



No longer Wedgwood blue, as it was in the early 1970s, the former 19th century school that served as a town hall for West View and then the expanded Olmsted Falls now is home to the Emerald & Violet Studio at 9722 Columbia Road.

In July 1969, county commissioners rejected all those proposals. However, a proposed merger of Olmsted Falls and West View then gained traction.

“During the negotiations on combining the two [villages], it was give and take, and one of the things that we wanted in West View, even though the place in Olmsted Falls was more centrally located and more appropriately suited for a city hall, we wanted city hall to be in the blue building [West View’s Village Hall, the former 19th century school building that now houses Barbara Richardson’s Emerald & Violet Studio at 9722 Columbia Road],” Sherbert said. “So, it became the city hall.”

Asked why he and Mills promoted the merger of the two villages, Sherbert replied, “Allan and I, as I said, agreed on a whole lot of things, and that was one that we felt very strongly about. There was a need for efficiency. We both had fire departments. We both had police departments. We both had governments. And it was ridiculous for two small communities of that size to be paying taxes [that high]. I’m pretty fiscally conservative. We thought it was a scale of efficiencies, and that was the main reason. We found sympathy for that in the Olmsted Falls area.”

As talk about merging both villages grew late in 1969 and early in 1970, some still hoped that the township might yet join them, but township officials did not favor that. Sherbert remembers one township trustee, William Gilligan, who strongly opposed changing anything in the township. “He was the grumpy curmudgeon, and he was just very difficult to get along with,” Sherbert said. “He lobbied the community against the township voting for it.”

The two villages formed a six-member committee with three members from Olmsted Falls – Charles Wright, Chester Atkinson and Donald Cunningham – and three from West View -- Sherbert, Bertram Lewis and Joy Gannett – to decide how to put the two municipalities together. They began meeting June 13, 1969. By January 1970, they presented a plan that both village councils approved and put the issue on the May ballot.

Most people thought of it as a merger of equals because Olmsted Falls, which covered 1.52 square miles, had about 2,400 residents, while West View, which covered 1.95 square miles, had about 2,500 residents. But legally, the plan called for Olmsted Falls to be annexed to West View. However, the negotiators agreed the combined community should use the Olmsted Falls name.

“I think Allan and I and Jan Castora probably together decided what we wanted as a minimum for West View, but we recognized that the history of the name was really in Olmsted Falls, and that really should be maintained,” Sherbert said. “It was absolutely the right thing to do.”

That agreement reflected the friendly nature of the negotiations, he said.

“We weren’t there to take over,” Sherbert said. “I think there was a lot of thought and lobbying that that’s what we were trying to do, but because of what actually happened and the name was retained, the atmosphere was retained. One thing we wanted to do in exchange for that was to move the city hall and the government down to West View. I knew that wouldn’t last forever, but at least it was a soothing point, I would say.”

Overall, he said, “It was give-and-take, and it was a fair concession on both parts.”

After citizens of the two villages voted on May 5, to combine them, officials spent the next several months working out further details. The two village councils held their first joint meeting on May 20, 1970. They also prepared for the November 3, 1970, election to determine who would lead the combined community beginning January 1, 1971.

By the time of that fall election, Mills, who was a brokerage manager for Crown Life Insurance Company, was



This was the headline on the front of the Olmsted Edition of the News Sun on November 5, 1970.

serving in his second term as mayor of West View. Voters chose him by a wide margin to serve as the mayor of the new Olmsted Falls. He received 1,319 votes to 309 votes for Arthur Falk, a lawyer, and 246 votes for Donald Zimmer, who was completing his fifth term as mayor of Olmsted Falls. At the time, Mills was 42 years old, Falk was 46 and Zimmer was 62.

Mills, who was a graduate of Parma High School and served in the U.S. Army before and during the Korean War, made part of his campaign platform the establishment

of a municipal charter for the new Olmsted Falls to ensure it would have home rule – in other words, more autonomy.

Voters chose, along with Mills, four people for two-year council terms and two for one-year council terms. The top vote-getter for a two-year term was Dr. William Mahoney, Jr., who later would become mayor of Olmsted Falls. He received 1,459 votes. Next was B. Holmes Neal with 1,058 votes, then David Fortier with 1,091 votes, and then Castora with 685 votes. Fortier, who then was 23 years old, later served as mayor of Olmsted Falls until his death in a traffic accident in 1986. The park where Plum Creek flows into Rocky River was named for him.

Winning election to the two one-year council positions were Mervin Ault with 1,121 votes and Sherbert with 1,012 votes. At the time, Sherbert was 32 years old.



Members of Olmsted Falls Council and other municipal officials and spouses thanked Sherbert for his service when he left the council with this wooden plaque carved by Shirley Hecker with a depiction of the town hall (left) on the front and their signatures on the back (right).

Sherbert's municipal service might have gone on well beyond that, but in 1972, the year the new Olmsted Falls became a city, General Motors completed its contract with the federal government at the tank plant, which was then closed. Although he was laid off, GM called him back to perform some work connected with the closure, but after that, he had to move back to Michigan for work as an administrative engineer in GM's Technical Center in Detroit. (The former tank plant eventually became the exhibition center known as the I-X Center at 6300 Riverside Drive in Brook Park.)

When Sherbert finished his term on the council, the other city officials gave him a wooden plaque with a hand-carved depiction of what then was Olmsted Falls City Hall by artist Shirley Hecker. "It was beautifully done," he said. The other city officials signed the back of the plaque.

In his interview with *Olmsted 200*, Sherbert marveled at how much property values have increased since he and his wife moved to West View. He said they paid less

than \$30,000 for their Lantern Drive home in 1962. He recalled that when he had to move in 1972, GM bought it from him for \$135,000. In recent years, properties in that neighborhood have sold for well more than \$200,000.



This police patch is one item that was retired after the merger.

With hindsight of more than half a century, Sherbert is pleased with the result of his work with others to join Olmsted Falls and West View together.

“Absolutely,” he said. “How could you not be today looking back?”

Sherbert said Olmsted Falls is “a progressive community now, and it accomplished what it intended to do. It became a more efficient community. I do remember now that part of the discussion was the school district. That, in itself, may have been worth it.”

Because the merger of the two small villages helped the population of the new Olmsted Falls reach more than 5,000 people to achieve city status by 1972, the Olmsted Falls Local School District was able to become the Olmsted Falls City School District by July 1, 1975. Under Ohio law, that meant the school district became autonomous and was no longer under the jurisdiction of a county school board.

Village Green Got Greener 140 Years Ago

The Village Green in Olmsted Falls has gone through many changes over the decades ever since 1830, when early settler John Barnum donated the land to the community as a site for Olmsted’s first frame schoolhouse. It continued to serve that purpose for almost a century, although the two-story brick Union Schoolhouse replaced the former wooden school in 1874. But the Village Green also became a park, and much work to make it so occurred 140 years ago this month in May 1884.

“The council met Monday evening and decided upon the erection of a first class speaker and band stand on the public park,” the Olmsted Falls column in the *Berea Advertiser* for May 1, 1884, reported. “This act of our council was due to the presentation of a petition signed by all the businessmen of this village. Other improvements, such as the laying out of a five-feet walk along the west side of the park and the planting of evergreens were also decided upon. All improvements to be made as soon as practicable. The new council starts out right, let the good work go on.”

On May 15, the column, which was written by someone using the pseudonym Calamity, reported: “Improvements to our park are being pushed through rapidly.”

By the end of the month, enough work was done that the columnist in the May 29 edition gave village leaders advice on what more could be done: “As our Park seems now to be the object of attention and of upward march in the line of progress we take leave to offer the following suggestions: Let three iron masts be erected in three respective corners of the park and let there be placed thereon three Brush Electric lights. These would be an especial benefit to our friend Adams. He would then doubtlessly join in the Sunday evening spoils.”

It's not clear what that last personal reference was about, but the columnist also reported this in a separate item in that May 29 edition: “Improvements to our park still continue. A number of juniper trees, donated by Mr. Schueren, has been planted at each entrance, also the laying of a five ft. side-walk on the west side of the park has been finished. The speaker and band stand is progressing finely; it will be the nicest in the county when completed.”

In the 1880s and early 1890s, Theodore Schueren (correct spelling) operated a nursery and and greenhouses just northeast of Olmsted Falls along along what now is Lewis Road. Thus, it is not surprising that he donated juniper trees to the Village Green. He likely was the first of Olmsted's many greenhouse operators.



Sidewalks on both the west and south sides of the Village Green still are five feet wide, but they are concrete now. The originals probably were slabs of sandstone like these farther west on Water Street.

As noted earlier, the Village Green has gone through many changes over the decades, but it likely was that May, 140 years ago, when it truly began to take on the appearance of a public park.

“Windmills of Holland” Turned 100 Years Ago in Olmsted

Olmsted went Dutch a century ago. We know that because Dennis Kushlak, president of Berea Historical Society, sent *Olmsted 200* a photo he found in the group's archives. He included this note: “I ran across this photo at the Mahler Museum. Evidently, 100 years ago Olmsted put on an operetta: Windmills of Holland. Most folks are, or were, identified for the *Berea News*.”

Indeed, someone listed the names of most of the individuals in the photo and indicated that the *Berea News* wanted to publish the photo. A search by *Olmsted 200* through microfilm of old newspapers at the Berea Historical Society failed to turn up the photo or any mention of “The Windmills of Holland” in any edition of the *Berea News*, but its more established competitor, the *Berea Enterprise*, carried this item in the Olmsted Falls column in its May 15, 1924, edition:

The pupils of the high school gave a very meritorious operetta, "The Windmills of Holland," on Friday evening at the high school auditorium. The performance showed careful training and good musical ability. The scenery was the work of Mr. William Mahon, this setting adding greatly to the stage setting. The H.S. orchestra under the leadership of Miss Higgins gave some fine numbers.



This is the cast photo for the Olmsted Falls High School production of "The Windmills of Holland" in May 1924.

Not every student involved was identified in the accompanying note, and the spelling of some names is hard to decipher, but here is what they appear to be:

Back row: 1) Mary Sheppard, 2) Helen Danielson, 3) Ruth Shattenberg, 4) Sally Casper, 5) Margaret Thompson, 6) Britie Thompson, 7) Helen Aish (?), 8) Gertrude Schoenherr, 9) Emma Crum.

Second row: 1) —, 2) Germain Shlater, 3) —, 4) Mary Friel, 5) Margaret Milton, 6) Dorothy Fenderbosch, 7) Saragrace Royr (?), 8) Mary Foley, 9) Carus Hissert, 10) Elizabeth Sheppard, 11) Hortense Woodward, 12) Helen Grundman, 13) Caroline Gibson, 14) Doris Scroggie, 15) Viola Pyle.

Front row: 1) Alice Strom, 2) Connie Seager, 3) Don Zimmer, 4) Charles Barnum, 5) Clarence Secord, 6) Gladys Miller, 7) Jim Fenderbosch.

That performance would have been held in the school that was built in 1916 (at what is now the northwest corner of Bagley Road and Mapleway Drive) to replace many small schools throughout Olmsted Township and Olmsted Falls. It was two years before the school doubled in size with an addition built in 1926. The original section is the easternmost portion of the current Olmsted Falls City Hall where the police department and many other key city offices are located.

Although the note with the photo referred to the *Berea News*, that newspaper at the time was still called the *Berea Shopping News*. It published its first issue on February 25, 1924, under that name. It kept that name for almost six months – 24 issues – through August 2, 1924. After that, it became the *Berea News*. For a few decades, both the *Berea*

News and the Berea Enterprise served the area, but the Berea News outlasted the Enterprise, which published its final edition on July 29, 1955.

Thanks go to Dennis Kushlak for making this story possible.

Eclipse Awes Spectators in Olmsted

April 8, 2024, long will be remembered by those who were present in Olmsted Falls and Olmsted Township for the first total solar eclipse in their recorded history. The last time a total eclipse passed through the area, 1806, Ohio had been a state for only three years, and the township that would come to be called Olmsted was still nine years away from having its first settlers of European descent move in.



Monday, April 8, 2024, was quieter than normal in downtown Olmsted Falls with most businesses closed for all or part of the solar eclipse day. On the left, as the sign indicates, Grand Pacific Popcorn Company was among the shops that closed during hours around the eclipse, but when it was open, it sold a special variety of eclipse popcorn. In the center, although the Grand Pacific Wedding Chapel was not one of the Ohio locations where people chose to get married during the eclipse, it did greet people with an eclipse-related message. On the right is the empty Grand Pacific Junction parking lot.

The day began with an overcast sky and rain, but the clouds cleared out by mid-morning. Ideally, they would have stayed away, but high, wispy clouds moved in about one o'clock. Fortunately, the sun was still able to shine through those clouds.



At 2:58 p.m., 15 minutes before the beginning of totality, the moon left just a crescent of the sun showing.

While many people traveled hundreds of miles from many states to view the eclipse in Ohio, people in Olmsted were able to watch it from their homes or other nearby locations. Some of them held eclipse-watching parties with family members and friends. Normally busy areas were quiet as many stores in the city and township closed for the day or closed early to allow their workers to view the eclipse. Most restaurants and stores in Grand Pacific Junction closed for all or part of the day, leaving the parking lot unusually deserted.

More than two dozen people gathered in David Fortier River Park for the event. During the two o'clock hour, with the use of protective eclipse glasses, they watched the dark disc of the moon gradually move from the lower right to the upper left across the bright disc of the sun. As more and more of the sun was covered, the temperature dropped a bit, and the weaker sunlight took on an eerie glow more associated with twilight than mid-afternoon.



This photo of the eclipsed sun shows the solar corona's color and the darkened sky around it, but the exposure washed out the dark lunar disc in the middle.

As predicted, the disc of the sun slipped behind the moon at 3:13:20 p.m., leaving the land dark. Lights along the walks in the park came on. The white glow of the solar corona, which normally is obscured by the bright glow from the main part of the sun, suddenly stood out all around the dark lunar disc. At the bottom of the disc, the most southerly end, a slender orange glow stood out like a skinny goatee on the face of the moon. It was a solar flare, which was not a surprise because the sun is near the maximum level of its 11-year sunspot cycle.

At 3:14, 40 seconds into totality, someone set off fireworks to the west of the park, followed by more fireworks 17 seconds later. That startled eclipse watchers and caused one child to cry briefly, but they otherwise were quiet and spoke little as they observed the strange sight before them.



On the left, little more than a cell phone screen and lighter sky on the horizon show up during the middle of the eclipse. Center, as the sun emerged from totality, eclipse observers can be seen in David Fortier River Park. On the right, those observers included Angela Turner and her daughter and son from Berea.

"It was amazing," one of the eclipse watchers in the park, Angela Turner of Berea, said minutes after totality ended. "The kids really enjoyed it. The family came in from out of town. It was amazing how just a dot would turn into brightness. It got pretty dark, and now it's looking like normal again."

Jane Gardner of Olmsted Falls watched the eclipse with friends at their house. "It was just awesome," she said. "I didn't know what all the hoopla was all about until I experienced it. It truly was an experience."

For a brief video about the eclipse-watching experience in David Fortier River Park by Mary Louise King (who proofreads each issue of *Olmsted 200*), go to https://youtu.be/ggZA_9aQmJc.

Still to Come

The next issue of *Olmsted 200* will include more about the 1936 film and other stories about notable past developments in Olmsted Falls and Olmsted Township.

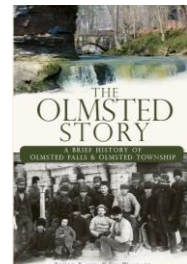
If you know of other people who would like to receive *Olmsted 200* by email, please feel free to forward it to them. They can get on the distribution list by sending a request to: wallacestar@hotmail.com. *Olmsted 200* has readers in several states beyond Ohio, including Arizona, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Florida, Georgia, Idaho, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Montana, New Hampshire, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Oregon, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Washington, West Virginia and Wisconsin, and as well as overseas in the Netherlands, Germany and Japan.

Your questions and comments about *Olmsted 200* are welcome. Perhaps there is something about Olmsted's history that you would like to have pulled out of *Olmsted 200*'s extensive archives. Or perhaps you have information or photos about the community's history that you would like to share.

If you have missed any of the past issues of *Olmsted 200* or want to share them with someone else, all of them can be found on Olmsted Township's website. Go to <http://olmstedtownship.org/newsletters/>. A list of *Olmsted 200* issues is on the right side. Click on the number of the issue you want to read. All of the issues of *Olmsted 200* also are available on the website of the City of Olmsted Falls. Find them at: http://www.olmstedfalls.org/olmsted_falls_history/index.php. A link to *Olmsted 200* can be found on the left side of the page.

Except where otherwise noted, all articles in *Olmsted 200* are written by Jim Wallace. Thanks go to Mary Louise King for helping in proofreading and editing many issues. Thanks also go to David Kennedy for frequently contributing research and insight for some stories. Written contributions and photos, as well as comments and questions about items in this newsletter, will be considered for publication. Send any correspondence by email to: wallacestar@hotmail.com.

Olmsted 200 is written, researched and edited by Jim Wallace, who is solely responsible for its content. He is co-author (with Bruce Banks) of ***The Olmsted Story: A Brief History of Olmsted Falls and Olmsted Township***, published in 2010 by The History Press of Charleston, S.C. ***The Olmsted Story*** is available at the Berea Historical Society's Mahler Museum & History Center and through online booksellers.



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