

A Thread In Time

Volume 1 Issue 2



**Newsletter of the
National Association of Textile Workers of America, Inc.**

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President's Message

As we enter into the Holiday season, we all have much to give thanks for. Personally, I thank all of my family including my ancestors, for the particular customs and observances that we keep. My forebears were an eclectic group from many cultures and these have melded into an "American" way of life that I heartily embrace with my current family.

We are moving ahead with membership growth. Our scholarship fund is stable and an endowment fund has been created for future scholarships. In this issue, you will find more information about the endowment fund and how we can all help it to grow.

An insignia is being developed and we are continuously being promoted at genealogical meetings. Thank you to all who are participating in these events.

I invite you all to contribute items to our newsletter. Please send me your articles, information, bulletins, etc. Thank you for your continued support of NSDTWA.

Regards,

Mary Brown

Calendar of Events

March 27, 2011 - Annual Meeting 1 p.m.

Slater Mills Museum

Pawtucket, RI

Watch for the call to the annual meeting after the New Year.

Massing of the Colors, 2010

Gail Rebello, our treasurer, carried the banner of NSDTWA at the recent Massing of the Colors. The album of pictures of the event may be viewed at thomasrogerssociety.com



Membership Notice

Have you paid your 2010 dues yet?

The opportunity to enjoy life membership is now offered at:

Under age 50 – 30 times the annual dues

Age 50 and older – 20 times the annual dues

We established this category of membership to allow members the privilege of a onetime payment and membership for life. This frees up our treasurer from multiple mailings for dues notices. You also have to consider that at sometime in the future dues will increase. This insures that you will not be affected by a dues increase. All life membership funds will be placed in a dedicated fund and only the interest will be used annually.

Currently, the annual dues are \$10. We know that we can't keep them at that level for long, so it may behoove you to purchase a life membership now. If you have already paid your 2010 dues, deduct

them from your life membership check. Checks should be made out to NSDTWA and mailed to Gail Rebello, treasurer, 4 Village Hill Rd., Lebanon, CT 06249.

Scholarship Endowment Fund Established

Bill Warner started off the Scholarship endowment fund with his personal check at the annual meeting. Another check for has been received and we know have a beginning endowment fund of \$150. This money cannot be used - only the interest. Please consider sending your check for this endowment fund to NSDTWA scholarship fund and mailed to Gail Rebello, treasurer, 4 Village Hill Rd., Lebanon, CT 06249.

Scholarship Recipient

Nicholas Lasch is a graduate of Windham Regional Vocational Technical School, Willimantic, CT.

*I am honored to have recieved this award.
Thank you so much for recognizing me for all
my hard work that I have put forth during my
four years at Windham Tech.*

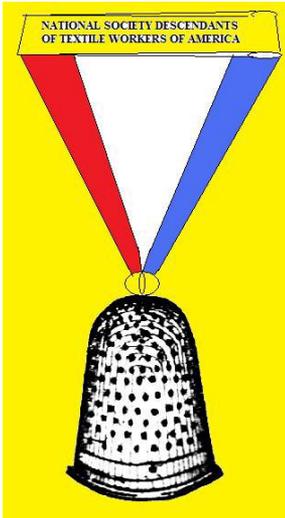
Thank You

Nick Lasch.

Website

Please visit our outstanding website at www.textileworker.com. You will notice that some of the honor roll members have special attachments with anecdotes about their life. You are welcome to submit material about your ancestor. Please contact or Tracy Crocker at Tracy@tracycrocker.com or Mary Brown at mbrown51@snet.net for submission of this material.

INSIGNIA



These designs were submitted by Raymond LeMay and William Warner and are meant to be used on various media. Each view can be interpreted to paper, cloth, metal, etc. One will be used on an official pin. Another would be put on our official banner or flag.

Please contact mbrown51@snet.net or 890-774-3458 with your ideas, comments or preferences. We will vote on this at our annual meeting in March. Proxy votes are encouraged if you can't be there.

Additional suggestions can be published in the annual meeting call which will be sent out in January.

The monograph presented next is offered with the permission of the Charlton, Massachusetts Historical Society. It gives a clear report of the importance of waterpower to the early textile industry. All towns are in Massachusetts unless otherwise specified.

A Brief History of Manufacturing on Cady Brook

By R. Reed Grimwade, Treasurer Charlton Woolen Company

Prepared for the Charlton Historical Society April 1, 1968

Because water power was essential to any early manufacturing project, manufacturing in Charlton City was centered along the banks of Cady Brook and its tributaries. This water shed, however, is really too small to produce any great quantity of power and in the summer time, the streams dry up completely. Practically all the early historians of the town decried the tremendous disadvantage and bemoaned the fact that the first attempts at producing power were from small dams built at a number of points along the stream and at one time or another, there were dams at at least twelve different locations on Cady Brook and its tributaries in and around Charlton City.

The next step to assure continuity of water all year long was to build a large reservoir and while the exact date is not yet known, some men in the early 1800's purchased 100 acres between Charlton City and Charlton Depot and built a dam to flood the area. They called in Williams Meadow Reservoir. Later in the nineteenth century, it became known as Hicks Pond and today it is called Glen Echo Lake. The importance of Williams Meadow Reservoir to Charlton industry should not be underestimated. Even after water power gave way to steam engines and electricity, the mills below used great quantities of water for processing and it can be honestly said that there would be no industry at all in Charlton City today without this reservoir. To digress for a moment, it should be noted here that great care was taken to build this dam. It stood for over 100 years with no apparent danger and in 1936, it was completely

rebuilt with the spillway being greatly enlarged. Today, the large stones that formed the sluiceway from the gate of the old dam are part of the rip-rap of the new one. If you look at these stones closely you will see how carefully each one was cut and formed so it would fit in its proper place. Because of the way it was constructed, however, the gate never closed tightly and water leaked out too rapidly in the summertime. While this was no great disadvantage where there were no campers on the lake, it was a tremendous source of annoyance to everybody in later years.

There was a dam built about 1/2 mile downstream from Williams Meadow Reservoir in a location called Proutyville after George Cyrus Prouty. This dam was situated on the very spot where the Massachusetts Turnpike now crosses the brook. George Prouty was born in Spencer (Massachusetts). His father was Cyrus Prouty who founded the famous shoe factory and industry in Spencer.

Instead of going into the shoe business, however, George at age 18 went to work for his relatives J.R. and J.E. Prouty who made wire in Lower Wire Village, Spencer. Having learned the wire business, he established a factory of his own in North Hadley. About 1868, he moved to Charlton City and went in partnership with Ira Berry at a location south of Charlton City – probably Berry’s Corner. In 1871 the partnership was dissolved and Mr. Prouty purchased from Warren Baker the property north of Charlton City and it was at this time that he purchased ¼ share of Williams Meadow Reservoir. The Records indicate that there was a factory of some sort in this location run by Warren Baker before Prouty.

In 1888 Nelson Hindley Prouty, son of George, was taken into the business which was then incorporated as the Prouty Wire Company. The two men built tenement houses known as Proutyville to provide homes for their help. Nelson Prouty left the business in 1894 but George continued to operate the mill until 1904 when at the age of 69 he sold it to the Charlton Wire Company. The Charlton Wire Company was short lived and was

liquidated soon afterwards. The buildings lay idle for many years and finally burned in the late 1940's. It is a coincidence that the machinery was purchased by the Spencer Wire Company which at that time was owned by Harry Goddard who was soon to become president of the Charlton Woolen Co. and the machinery was dismantled and hauled to Spencer under the supervision of Winthrop G. Hall who was Mr. Goddard's nephew and who is now president of the Charlton Woolen Co.

George Prouty was very progressive in his thinking and it was he who took the initiative in the proceeding which resulted in securing the franchise to operate what subsequently became the Worcester and Southbridge Trolley Line. Nelson Prouty subsequently moved to New Jersey and in 1931, he sold a public auction all of his holdings in Charlton including the tenement houses and his rights to Williams Meadow Reservoir. The rights were purchased by Henry Clark who subsequently sold them to Charlton Woolen Co.

Farther down-stream bypassing for the moment the Springbrook Mills of the Charlton Woolen Co. were two small enterprises of worthy note. The first was a sash and blind shop first run by Charles Taft who later sold it to the partnership Knight and Rich. The Rich here was Thomas E. Rich and the Knight was his father-in-law Albert. In 1872, Knight and Rich purchased from Bainbridge Douty the water rights on ¼ interest in Williams Meadow Reservoir and also what is now the Upper Mill Pond and Taylors Pond. Later Thomas' brother, Paris, was taken into the business. The exact location of this shop is unknown, but I believe it was located between Brookfield Road and the present Charlton City Post Office. Thomas Rich's first wife died in 1880 and the records seem to indicate that he pulled out of the business shortly afterwards. In 1879, Thomas and Paris Rich sold to Andrus March the water rights to their shop. Thomas worked in various woodworking shops throughout the State and finally settled in Barre where he became a prominent manufacturer with many inventions to his name.

The other small enterprise was the saw and grist mill run by Seth Carpenter and later his son, Marcus located by the large dam just above the lower mill of the Charlton Woolen Co. The Carpenters also made cider and vinegar in season. The building passed from one hand to another during the 1900's and was finally destroyed by the 1955 flood. In 1956 Charlton Woolen Co. purchased the land and pond.

One of the tributaries to Cady Brook runs about a mile west of Charlton City and it was on the brook in the year 1880 that Merritt D. Aldrich built a small woolen factory. Mr. Aldrich was a farmer who had lived in town for about 18 years. He ran the mill on his own for about two years and then leased the property and machinery to J.O.Copp and Nathaniel Taft. Mr. Taft had extensive interests in the woolen business in Oxford and the records seem to indicate that he took no active part in running the Charlton Mill and probably only helped finance Mr. Copp. In 186 he withdrew altogether. One of Mr. Copp's daughters later became the second wife of Mr. Taft's son David. Mr. Copp ran this mill under the name J.O.Copp's Charlton Woolen Mills for about 20 years. Around 1890 he built the house now standing on the corner of Brookfield Road and Route 20 which was later sold to the Catholic Bishop of Springfield. Mr. Aldrich then leased the property to Charles A. Hill of Worcester for a short while and finally in 1902 he and Hill sold the property to the Ashworth family of Leicester.

The Ashworths at this time, ran the Leicester Woolen Company. Thomas and James Ashworth Purchased the Aldrich properties in Charlton and ran the mill under the name of Aldrich Manufacturing Co. In 1904 the mill burned and was rebuilt. James Ashworth had one son, Ralph, who ran the mill after the deaths of his uncle and father and sold it to the Charlton Woolen Co. in 1962. The property is now used as a warehouse.

The largest and most important industry in Charlton City by far during the nineteenth century was "Cady Brook Mills" which is now the finish plant of the Charlton Woolen Co. located on Route 20, We have not yet discovered the exact date that

manufacturing started in this location, but know it to be early in the nineteenth century if not before. The records are clear, however, that Caleb Torrey of Oxford purchased the property from Jaber Willis in 1835. The deed from Willis to Torrey clearly indicated that there was a mill pond on the property and that there was a falling and scouring mill with built or planned for the site. The deed from Willis to Torrey gave Willis the right to “wash the clothes of his family in the fulling mill.” Testimony 50 years later by Mr. Torrey’s daughter, Mary Brown, in court placed the time as 1841 when Mr. Torrey “tore down whatever building there were and built his fulling and scouring mill.” Since no mention of spinning or weaving was made by these two sources, we must assume that Caleb Torrey established a business to wash and finish woolen cloth that was spun and woven at home. Mr. Torrey’s grandson was Arthur L. Brown, a well known figure in Charlton City during the first half of the 20th century who died in 1948 at the age of 89. If Mr. Brown ever knew his grandfather had once owned the Cady Brook Mills, he never gave any indication of it. We have not yet discovered when, but the Cady Brook Mills at sometime acquired a ½ interest in Williams Meadow Reservoir. In 1848 Mr. Torrey sold the property to Michael Coogan and in 1856 it was acquired by Andrus March. During these years, carding, spinning and weaving equipment had been added to the mill and it was probably fully integrated. Andrus March was evidently a very good business man. Records show that he had interests in a great many enterprises and a large amount of land in town. He had a mortgage on the Prouty property at one time.

March Hill, the fairly steep hill by the mill was obviously named after him and he lived at the top of March Hill in the house now owned by Frank Ronzo. His son, Harry, was a well known figure in Charlton City during the first part of the twentieth century. My best recollection of Harry is the day he showed me his wooden leg.

At any rate, Andrus March ran the mill until he leased the property to Baker and Bottomley. The Baker here is probably

Warren Baker, mentioned earlier as a former owner of the Prouty properties. Baker and Bottomley ran the mill for four years whereupon Bottomley withdrew and March took his place. In 1866, Baker withdrew and for the next nine years, March ran it alone.

In 1875, he rented the property to the partnership of Edward Akers and Nathan Norris. Edward Akers, my great grandfather, appears to be the first person to come to Charlton with any outside experience in manufacturing woolen cloth. He was born in 1829 in Granby, Massachusetts and left home at an early age to work in various woolen mills. He worked in the mills in Monson, Ludlow and Stafford Springs,(Connecticut) all the time advancing his position. After spending a year or so in the States of Illinois and Wisconsin he returned east and worked in a mill in Auburn, Mass. In 1875 he moved to Charlton. In 1877 Edward Akers purchased property about ¼ mile upstream from Cady Brook from the Thayer family where the upper mill of Charlton Woolen Co. now stands. There is no indication there was any other factory on this site at the time although there was a pond across the street which he also purchased. Here, he built the Spring Brook Mill. In 1878, the partnership of Akers and Taylor was formed. In 1885, the Cady Brook Mill burned and Nathan Norris rebuilt. Norris was probably still in debt to Andrus March at the time and the records indicate he had very tough going. In 1887, he mortgaged his property again and when he could not meet the payments a year later, the property was sold to Akers and Taylor.

So in the year 1888, the Springbrook Mill and the Cady Brook Mill came under one ownership even though they were still integrated mills. Everything known about Akers and Taylor indicates they were extremely progressive men. They moved the carding, spinning and weaving machinery out of Cady Brook Mill into Spring Brook Mill and moved all the finishing and dyeing machines to Cady Brook Mill this making the whole operation more efficient. In the custom of the times and mainly because they needed a large working force close at hand, they

built many tenement houses in Charlton City and even built the large apartment house now on Brookfield Road and still called the Aklor House after both of them. Also as was the custom then, they operated their own general store. They were among the first people in the country to recognize the value of automatic sprinklers, and in the 1890's they erected a dam upstream on Spring Brook to serve as an elevated water supply for their sprinklers. Their first efforts here, however, were unsuccessful because the first dam they built broke before the pond was filled up taking a house along with it. Undaunted, however, they moved a few hundred feet further up stream and built what is now Ice Hose Pond on Stafford Street. From this pond, they laid pipes not only to their sprinklers and hydrants at both mills, but also to all of their tenement houses and these houses were among the first in Charlton to have running water toilets. There also place hydrants behind Aklor House and near Mr. Akers property on Stafford Street which the company maintains to this very day. At one time, Mr. Akers had fountains on his front lawn supplied by this water.

In 1893 Akers and Taylor built an addition onto the Cady Brook Mills and ran into a lawsuit with the Methodist Church who claimed that the addition (now the dye house of the mill) was built on the Church property which was willed to them by the Willis family. The lawsuit is important to us today because the testimony given at the trial gave a good deal of information about the early history of the mill. It was here that Mary Brown testified that her father had built the mill in 1841. Mr. Akers took little part in the proceeding because he had attended the Chicago World's Fair at the time the aggression occurred. Records of this trial were unfortunately were lost in the 1955 flood but it appeared the church won some sort of settlement.

Edward Akers lived at what is now the Taylor Homestead on the corner of Stafford Street and Brookfield Road. Practically on his front lawn stood the Methodist Church.

If he had any malice towards the Church because of the lawsuit, he did not show it although he admitted he was never a

good church goer. In the early 1900's he offered the church land across the street and a new room downstairs if they would agree to move the building at his expense. Surprisingly enough, some people in the church including the minister were opposed because they felt that the ground the church was on was more hallowed than the proposed new ground that the new room might be turned into a game room for unchristian activities. An old newspaper, also destroyed by the 1955 flood gave the position of both sides. The minister was especially vehemently opposed to the change and also to Mr. Akers, noting that he had not attended church in some time. Mr. Akers rejoined was that it was true he was not a good church goer but he noticed the minister still picked up his weekly groceries free of charge at the company store. At any rate, Mr. Akers finally agreed to supply a new pipe organ to the church if they would move and this sealed the bargain. The pipe organ in that church is still considered one of the finest small organs in existence and the so-called game room has been the scene of many a church supper and other fine activities. It was on the property vacated by the church the Mr. Akers put up his fountains.

Mr. Akers had a younger daughter, Grace, who married my grandfather, Henry G. Grimwade, always known as Harry. Harry Grimwade was born in London in 1872 and his father died before he was 10. His mother left the eldest child, John, who was 14 on his own and took Harry, a younger brother, and an older sister to America. Her trip was arranged for her by the Church of England and their destination was Halifax, but half way over she was persuaded by friends on board that the United States offered more opportunity, so she stayed on the ship through to New York. Since she had no money, she apprenticed Harry and his older sister, Emily, out to foster homes. Harry lived with a very kind family named Thurston on Long Island and learned to be a druggist. It is believed he came to the Charlton-Southbridge area to visit his sister, Emily who was working as a private nurse. At any rate, he came to Charlton when about 16 years old and went to work in the company store. While he advance to important

positions within the company probably equivalent to superintendent today, he never had a managerial say in the operations of Akers and Taylor. He married Grace Akers in 1895 and she died in 1903 at the age of 33 presumably of a heart attack. Harry's sister Emily came to live with him and she brought up his two children.

In addition to the two mills in Charlton City proper, Akers and Taylor also ran a smaller picker mill about a mile downstream from the Cady Brook Mill on the road to Southbridge. The two men evidently leased this mill in the 1880's and purchased in outright in 1889. The building burned and the dam was washed away in the 1920's but traces of both are still very evident today.

In the late nineteenth century, water power generated both by water wheels and water turbines was gradually augmented by steam engines. With all the power in the mill coming from one central source, there was naturally a lot of overhead shafting and belts which connected to each machine. The work day was usually 10-12 hours and lanterns were used for lighting until electric lights were installed about 1900. It was common to work Saturday. The machinery, like the working conditions was primitive by today's standard. The looms were not automatic and were only 30" wide. The cloth was dried by hanging of frames (called tenter frames) outdoors and I suppose if they got a week of cold wet weather, the cloth simply mildewed and started to smell. Employment was about 120 people. They made satinets which as nearly as I can determine had a cotton warp and a wool filling. The evidently purchased cotton yarn for their warp. They were known for inexpensive material so quality was probably none too good.

When trolley cars came to Charlton, Fred Taylor moved to Worcester. Prior to this time, he live on what is now Brookfield Road where my mother lives now. He had nine children and built a large house near Worcester Tech which for many years after his death was Alpha Tau Omega fraternity house.

Akers and Taylor ran into financial trouble during the credit panic of 1907, and the depression that followed. While it is true, they were overextended at the time, a great deal of the trouble was beyond their control.

The mill failed and because it was a partnership, each man lost heavily. Both Edward Akers and Fred Taylor died within a year of this tragedy. The entire property was foreclosed by the Mechanics Bank of Worcester who incorporated it under the name of Akers and Taylor Manufacturing Co. It was during this period that both Patrick Daley and Mabel Olson began their long association with the mill. Mrs. Olson worked for the mill for 54 years until her death in 1962. Patrick Daley at the time of this writing, is completing his 61st year of continuous service. Harry Grimwade meanwhile had left the company and worked for a short while for Winfield Kilton of Shrewsbury who was a raw material supplier to the many mills in Worcester County. The bank, of course, wanted to sell the mill and while they were waiting for a buyer to come along, they tried to run it. After a year or so of unsuccessful operations, they finally hired Harry Grimwade to manage it for them. He did so well that he soon became the logical person to buy the company but was not able to get the necessary financial backing until a few years later.

In 1912, the needed help came and the Akers and Taylor Manufacturing Co. was sold to Harry Grimwade, Winfield Kilton and Harry Goddard. Mr. Kilton lived in Shrewsbury and had known something about the mill for a number of years. Mr. Goddard was one of the most prominent men in Worcester, having run the great Spencer Wire Company for many years before he sold it to the Wickwire group. In addition to his large holdings at the Mechanics Bank, of which he was a director, he had interests in a number of other enterprises in Worcester County. He was, of course, familiar with the mill through the bank and he evidently thought it a good investment. Whatever his reasons were, it was the beginning of the long friendly association of the Goddard family with the mill.

Grimwade, Goddard and Kilton each owned on third of the stock with Goddard being elected president and Grimwade, treasurer. Both Goddard and Kilton were silent partners and left the day to day management of the company to Grimwade. In 1916 the three men changed the name of the company to Charlton Woolen Co. Mr. Kilton sold out a few years later and the other two men along with Harry's son Roger bought the shares. In 1917 the mill equipped itself with electric motors and started to eliminate the overhead shafting. A few years later, the engine and water turbines were abandoned and for the first time since their existence the mills no longer depended on Cady Brook for power although they still needed tremendous quantities of water for processing.

Harry Goddard died in 1927 and Harry Grimwade died a year later. The stock went to their individual families and a gradual diffusion of ownership began. Mr. Goddard's nephew, Winthrop G. Hall was elected president and Roger M. Grimwade treasurer.

The woolen business during these years was constantly plagued with over production and when multiple shifts became common in the 1930's the problems of overproduction became acute. When the N.R.A. and the 40 hour week went into effect, most mills started running three shifts because they found it so much more efficient. With the production of each mill more than doubled, it was inevitable that half of them should go out of business. Charlton Woolen Co. survived because among other reasons it had an aggressive policy of installing the best possible equipment. Because Springbrook mill was the larger and more important, the lion's share of the money went into this establishment and today, it rivals any mill of its size in the world for efficiency. Cady Brook mill while equipped with modern machinery is not as efficient because of the very old building and plans are now being made to modernize it. In 1955 as everybody knows, the mills were extensively damaged by a flood which washed out the dam at Williams and Williams Meadow Reservoir. While it amounted to over 15 inches which is almost

3 times as much as ever fell before or since at any one time. Both mills were rebuilt and Roger Grimwade's decision to rebuild has been justified many times over because the years since then have been the most prosperous in the company's long history. Roger Grimwade died in 1963.

No history of the company would be complete without some mention of the people and nationalities who worked there. In the beginning, they were mostly Yankees who ran farms on the side, but as the mill grew larger it actively recruited outside help. Many French Canadians came to town in the early 1900's and shortly later the first of a great number of Albanians came to Charlton. Both these nationalities not only helped the mills tremendously but greatly enriched the town as well.

We should also mention floods because no industry built alongside a river could avoid them. In fact, they were so commonplace that not much mention in early history is made of them. Dams were constructed in such a way that they could easily be repaired and the biggest danger, of course, was that a dam upstream would give way and imperil all the dams below it. In the nineteenth century most of the floods were caused by heavy spring rains which coincided with melting snow similar to the flood we had here on March 18. While these were serious, they were nowhere near the problem that came when, because of changing weather patterns, we started to get tropical storms, hurricanes and torrential rains which came in late summer. In 1927, a flood washed out the dam by the old picker house on the road to Southbridge, the dam was never rebuilt. In 1936, a spring flood endangered Williams Meadow Reservoir dam and it was because of this that the dam was completely rebuilt. In 1968 the first of the late summer tropical storms hit and the rainfall was far greater than in 1936. Williams meadow Reservoir came through this flood with absolutely no danger but the dam at Cady Brook Mill was lost. It too was rebuilt far stronger than before, and during the 43's and early 50's, we had numerous spring floods and tropical storms which caused little or no damage. Diane, of course, changed this picture, and the company lost all

of its dams. The state of Massachusetts rebuilt Williams Meadow Reservoir because by this time it was a large recreational area as well as the main source of water for the mill. The company for all practical purposes rebuilt only Ice House Pond dam for fire production and Carpenter Pond dam which it purchased at that time for processing water at Cady Brook Mill.

Today the Charlton Woolen Co. is a highly specialized operation making cloth for inexpensive ladies and children's coats. Its raw materials are primarily reclaimed woolen and synthetic fibers and the methods it has developed over the years to process these fibers are copied throughout the world. The chief competition for the mill comes for Italy and we are complimented every year by the Italians when they copy every one of our new patterns and designs. The mill is known for its quality throughout the coating trade. Its products are being accepted by more and more people, every year it can look forward to a growing market for years to come.

Sources: Land and property records of Worcester County. Recollections and records from families involved in the operation of these mills and from the records of the Charlton Woolen Company.

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