

Sacramento River Delta Historical Society

NEWSLETTER

"For what is the present, after all, but a growth out of the past." -Walt Whitman

NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 22, NUMBER 1

JUNE 2002

SOCIETY NOTES

☞ The January Potluck was well attended and enjoyed by all. During a brief business meeting the following officers were elected: President Fran Bates, Vice President Tom Herzog, Treasures Joanne Carr, Corresponding Secretary Kim Sackett, Recording Secretary Cathy Hemly, and Directors Dennis Leary, Marshall Pylman, Joe Enos, Judy Culbertson, Linda van Loben Sels, C.J. Jensen, and Leonard Souza. The success of the dinner was due in large measure to the crew who decorated, set up and arranged, including Jerry and Robert James, Bobbie Collier, Terry and Jayne Alchorn, Jim and Barbara Dahlberg, Gloria Santos, Connie King and Mary Fulster. Our many thanks to them. Carol Watson and Gene Wisemann were presented gifts for many years of service on the Board of the Society. The treat of the evening was the presentation of a video, "The Good Old Days, Sacramento Remembered". Many in the audience could identify with some of the Sacramento places and events. We are hoping to be able to work with Steve La Rosa, the producer of this video, to develop a film like this for the Delta. If you have any ideas for topics or if you have old movies please contact a Board member.

Note: Jim Dahlberg has since replaced Leonard Souza on the Historical Society Board (see note on Leonard's passing, below). Jim has contributed many ideas and articles to the Resource Center and to the Society over many years. Previously he has served as President and a director. Jim managed the Historical Exhibit at the Pear Fair for over twenty years.

☞ It is not history yet, but should be noted for the record: On January 19, 2002 the Olympic Torch stopped in Walnut Grove at Dr. Paul Barnes Park. The flame arrived accompanied by six torchbearers, a motorcade, Delta High School Chorus, Elk Grove Dance Troupe, and the Travis Air Force Band. There was 15 minutes of speeches by officials and dignitaries, Don Natoli, Supervisor, and organizers like Sheriff Blanas and others to a crowd of several thousand. Lee Poythress of Elk Grove carried the torch into town.

According to the Sacramento Bee (1/20/02), Walnut Grove, population 3,000, went all out for the torch with a day of festivities and a 40-foot tall replica of the Statue of Liberty, which now sits next to the Pizzeria.

A historical note... This is not the first time the torch has passed through the area. In 1960 it was carried by four Courtland High School trackmen, Ron Maeda, Frank Ellington, Jim Hudson and David Frieders. They each ran a mile up Franklin

Boulevard on the way to Squaw Valley.

☞ The March General Meeting featured Mr. George Bayse, a lawyer and a former California Historical Society President, who delivered a fascinating talk on water rights, flood control and other legal aspects of water and the Delta. The meeting was well attended and much enjoyed by the attendees. (see article on page 2)

☞ On April 24 we worked with the Walnut Grove Library in support of their "Turn off the TV Week". Several of our members participated in the open house.

☞ The May General Meeting featured Stan Garvey, a popular speaker and authority on steamships on the Sacramento River particularly the Delta King and the Delta Queen. More details in the next newsletter.

☞ *With Fondest Memories*

Two dedicated SRDHS Board Members have passed away. June Werhan - a most accurate Recording Secretary, always supporting and always pleasant - is dearly missed.

Leonard Souza also passed away. He was the epitome of the Historical Society. Always ready with a good historical reference—he gave three programs last year all heavily attended. This does not include the great job he did as President nor the support he and his wife, Lillian, always gave the Society in whatever it was doing. Our Resource Center is now home to much of Leonard's very impressive private collection of historical photos and documentation.

Last year we also lost a number of strong supporting members, including Dorothy McCormick, Jane Wheeler and very long-time member Genevieve James. In June of this year, Nelson Eddy Jr., another stalwart member, died at his home in

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MARCH MEETING: Delta/Reclamation District History & Insights

reported by Carol Watson

Mr. George Bayse, a lawyer and 45 year veteran of Delta water wars, spoke about flood control and water rights in the Delta.

There are two kinds of water rights, appropriate-the right to take water away from the river to use somewhere else, and riparian-the right to use the water on adjacent land. The miners in the 1850's appropriated water to use at the mines. The use of the water and who was first to take the water play a part in court decisions. In the 1880's Miller and Lux established riparian rights in the lower San Joaquin Valley. At the time California was using the English common law, which defined the right to use water on adjacent land.

Delta water is mostly riparian. The many streams and sloughs give a constant supply, with the only problem being quality when the tide brings in salt.

In 1850, when California became a state, it claimed the riverbanks and streams, tidal lands (which overflow once a day along the bay) and the swamp and overflow lands. In 1860, a reclamation act to save swamp and overflow lands (which overflow at high water) provided \$2 an acre to those who would build levees and reclaim swamp and overflow land.

According to John Thompson, the Delta islands are not swamp lands. Swamps are tidelands and therefore the state owns them unless titles are granted. Overflow lands are different from swamps in that the daily tides do not overflow them.

Interiors of islands are below sea level. (Think "saucer" shaped.) Overflow causes oxidation and burning of peat and the land erodes away. This creates pressure on the levees and makes them difficult to maintain.

In the 1880's the miners upstream, using hydraulic methods to wash out gold, managed to fill the rivers and streams with mud. Floods covered orchards with silt. Farmers in Yuba and Butte Counties filed suit to stop the mud onslaught. The Federal Circuit Court ruled that the miners could use the land,

but not destroy it. Property must be used in a way not to damage others. When the Judge issued an injunction against hydraulic mining, the miners fled to the mountains and no one was found on whom to serve the injunction.

In the 1890's, Congress created a Debris Commission asking the Army Corps of Engineers to control debris and ensure navigation, which stopped at Marysville. The Debris Commission never got going. It wasn't until the 1950's that the rivers and streams were all flushed out by the natural water runoff.

Flood control on the Sacramento River cannot be handled by levees alone. In the early 1900's plans were made to control 300,000 cubic feet of water per second. The 1907 and 1909 floods produced 600,000 feet per second. In order to accommodate more water, the Army of Engineers excavated the Sacramento River channel from Collinsville to Rio Vista. That is when Wood Island disappeared. With the river widened, more water was let out at higher flows. Salt intrusion came in low water in the late summer. In 1932 salt water reached Hood, however, Sherman Island has had the largest salt impact. Today the State owns almost 90% of Sherman Island. The bypasses (Sutter and Yolo) let out water when there is too much in the river system. These are controlled at Chico. There has not been a 600,000 flow since 1920. (Interesting note: the American River is controlled for 100,000 feet per second - Sacramentans need more water taken out upstream.)

The bypasses take 5/6ths of flood water on the Sacramento, only 100,000 feet is left in the Sacramento River. A book entitled "River Rising" tells the story of the Army engineers and the Mississippi in 1927 when they realized they could not close it off and adopted plans to help the water escape. Fortunately the west was using bypasses earlier.

The State Central Valley Project involved Shasta Dam (1949) and getting water to the San Joaquin River. During the Depression the federal government, through the Central Valley Project, built Shasta and Folsom Dams, pumps to Fresno, the Tracy pumps to the Delta-Mandota Canal, and the Cross Channel at Locke to supply better quality water to farmers in the San Joaquin Valley by going around the Delta. The Shasta Dam stores water in winter and releases it to the San Joaquin Valley in the summer.

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Society Notes...continued from front

Courtland. We will miss them all.

☛ And finally, some updates from our President, Fran Bates:

- ✓ Our thoughts and prayers are with Board Member, Bobbie Collier, as she deals with some challenging health issues.
- ✓ A committee headed by Tom Herzog and CJ Jensen is getting underway to work on a video documentary of the Delta and its citizens. Please contact Fran if you'd like to be involved in this effort or contribute information or materials.

- ✓ We're still welcoming volunteers to assist in our Oral History program and other documentation efforts. Please call if you would like to offer a few hours of typing, or conduct an oral history interview.
- ✓ Our September General Meeting Program will be a trip to Sacramento, to hear Dr. Bob LaPerriere, curator, tell about Pioneer Medicine at the Medical Society History Room. Please call Fran at (916) 776-1012 to arrange car pools/rides. There are no meetings in July and August and we look forward to seeing you all at our September outing. ☛

VORDEN HISTORIETTE

written by Kathleen Graham Hutchinson

Vorden is located in the Pierson District on the east bank of the Sacramento River, midway between Courtland and Walnut Grove, and about a mile upstream from Twin Cities Road. The town was originally called Trask's Landing after Charles Frederick Trask.

Trask was born February 24, 1847 in Mobile, Alabama. His father, also Charles Frederick, from Massachusetts was a sea captain whose ears were cut off by the marauding North African Barbary Pirates. His mother, Jane, operated a hotel in Beverly, Massachusetts. After having been widowed and having lost an insurance contest, Jane left him in Beverly and took ship for San Francisco via Cape Horn. Shipwrecked out of Valparaiso, she returned to Chile, remaining in Valparaiso until 1850 when she embarked again to San Francisco. Valparaiso at the time was home to many Americans and huge imports. East Coast merchandise was stored in Valparaiso awaiting shipment to San Francisco.

On arrival in California, Jane Trask worked as a cook in Tuolumne County, was a storekeeper in Iowa Hill, and owned a saw mill on Monona Flat, also in Iowa Hill. She lived in Sacramento for a short time where she invested in mining stock and lost. It must have been while residing in Sacramento that she bought 220 acres on the east side of the Sacramento River. In 1855 she remarried at Iowa Hill. She sent for her son, but he soon returned to Beverly to finish his schooling. He came west again in 1867 and began to learn the ship carpenters trade in San Francisco. His mother died in 1868 and his stepfather, J. M. Hawley, asked him to run the 220-acre ranch his mother had purchased in the Pierson District, then referred to as Runyon Island. The site of the ranch became known as Trask's Landing.

In 1876, the Union Savings Bank repossessed 4,000 acres of mortgaged land in the Pierson District. The bank sent a delegation to take a look at the land and sent its young employee, P. J. van Loben Sels, to follow up on maintenance problems. Van Loben Sels, who was born in the small central Netherlands city of Zuphen and grew up in the nearby country village of Vorden, returned to the Netherlands and persuaded his family to lend him funds to purchase property in the district. He eventually owned 6,000 acres.

In the meantime, P.J. van Loben Sels married Adele de Fremery

the daughter of James de Fremery, President of the San Francisco Union Savings Bank and Dutch Counsel General in San Francisco. de Fremery had earlier arrived in San Francisco with a shipment of wooden shoes to sell. San Franciscans laughed at his merchandise and he sold them as kindling in the fuel-scarce city.

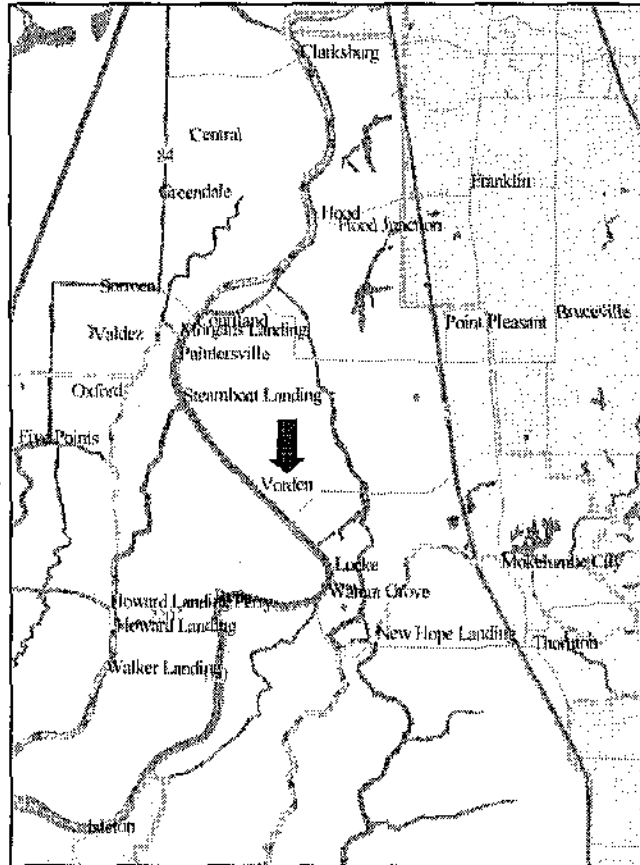
Back in the Pierson District, in 1878, the weak back levee gave way and the entire district flooded threatening the lucrative fruit orchards on the river sill. The back of the district was a lake. After much surveying of the property and consultation with the other landowners in the district, it was decided to rebuild the levee system. The cost was \$150,000 and the massive back levee is a Pierson District hallmark. It is 9 miles long, 23 feet high and over 12 feet wide at the top. Over \$130,000 was spent on pumps to drain the lake dry and to maintain the land. Half of the cost of the entire project fell on the bank and half on the landowners. It was a heavy cost for some landowners to bear.

It appears that Trask had left the area by 1878, perhaps a victim of flood, debt or repossession. In 1887, Alex Brown leased 3,830 acres from the bank. He devoted the acreage to growing asparagus. In the 1890's van Loben Sels renamed the Trask's Landing settlement Vorden after his hometown in the Netherlands.

Vorden, in its heyday, had a wharf, two grocery stores, saloon/tavern, hotel, post office, school, Catholic Chapel, cannery and a number of houses. On holidays the residents used the river at waters edge to view fireworks set off on the levee. In 1898 Pio Simoni purchased four acres on the riverside along with the tavern, which had six bedrooms above. Pio was born in Fagnano, Lucca, Italy and emigrated at 15 years of age. After arrival in California he worked for the huge Miller and Lux enterprise. His uncle in San Francisco "arranged" his marriage to Guiseppina de Alberto and together they moved to Vorden. In 1913 when the levee height was raised, he moved the tavern across the levee to the east side and in 1914 Pio added a grocery and men's wear store plus a hotel. Until after World War II, a pole shed stood adjacent to the front of the buildings to shield horses from the weather. Colorful advertisements adorned the walls. He and Giuseppina lived on the premises where they raised a family, which included twins. All the family worked in the business.

The Vorden Hotel was located at the corner of the River Road

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and the Vorden Road. It was very popular for dinner, especially Sunday family style dinner. Patrons came from miles around to dance and enjoy the seven course Italian dinner, which cost \$1.00. Louisa Simoni Dewing remembered making 300 ravioli each Saturday to serve during the week. At the dances in the saloon the Simoni boys played the banjo and mandolin. By 1921, A. Lazzerini was listed as proprietor.

Vorden School, like Vorden, was halfway between Courtland and Walnut Grove. It was located at the sharp right angle corner on the Vorden Road as it intersects Herzog

Road, situated near the back levee not far from the site of the Jongeneel van Loben Sels house "Amistad". It was a one-room school where all nine grades were taught. The Vorden School was a gable roof building with a belfry atop its roof, lacy verge boards and turned pillars, which supported the verandah roof.

The school district was organized in 1904 and Jongeneel was appointed Clerk and Mrs. Cogswell was the teacher. By 1908, Thomas Stephenson, a Pierson District dairyman, was Clerk and Miss Harriet Wilson was the teacher. In 1921, Vorden joined the Bates Union School District. Hattie "Teach" Wilson became principal of Bates Elementary School until her retirement in 1949. Pupils included members of the Herzog, Andreuccetti, Stephenson, Goodman, Simian, de Back, Eastman, and McMullins families.

The cannery was owned and operated by Del Monte. It was located on the upstream side of Vorden Road at the levee, approximately at the location of the Wm. Herring house. As shown in contemporary photographs, sheds and other cannery buildings were located across the levee on the riverside. The cannery processed only asparagus and seasonally employed upwards of 200 Chinese laborers. The river carried, on the tide, asparagus trimmings ("butts") for miles from the many riverside canneries. This refuse floated back and forth with the tide, but was gradually carried away by the flow.

The Vorden Country Store sat, it appears, directly in front of the cannery. The roof was gabled and trimmed with scalloped barge/verge boards, finials, and slender turned pillars supporting a verandah roof and balustrade porch rail. Mr. Shirley Hall ran the store and also was Postmaster. After the Post Office was absorbed by the Locke Post Office, he moved to Courtland where he worked at Miller & Jackson's. He later operated the Red and White Store in Courtland with his wife, Leota, until retirement. In 1921, the Vorden Store advertised drugs, merchandise and groceries. In 1929, it advertised general merchandise, ice cream and gentlemen's clothing.

The Glanvale Creamery was also located on the Vorden Road.

There were several other dairies and creameries in the area, notably the Cooperative, which sold butter to the St. Francis Hotel in San Francisco, and Delta Dairy, owned and operated by the Herzog family.

A Catholic Chapel upstream of Vorden (located approximately where the high wire line crosses the river) was served by a

circuit priest who visited monthly to hear confession and say mass. The chapel was discontinued when St. Anthony's Catholic Church opened in Walnut Grove in the 1930's.

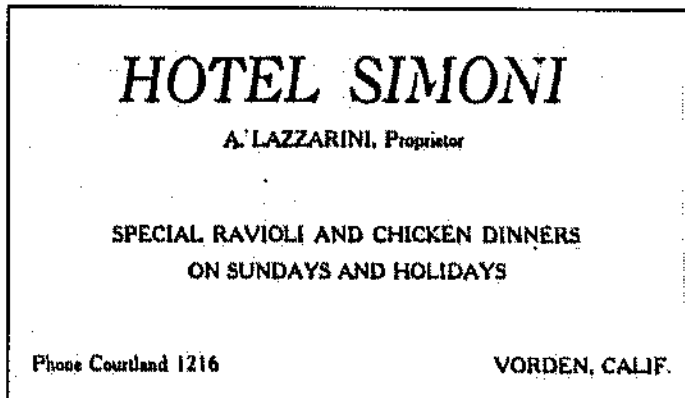
The Henry Andreuccetti house is the oldest house still standing. It was built by Joseph W. de Back, a

Vorden resident and local builder. He also built, among others, the George Greene house at the point of Randall Island. Among families long associated with Vorden are Herzog, Andreuccetti, Stephenson, Goodman, Simoni, Eastman, Jongeneel, McMullins, van Loben Sels, Crofton, Heringer, Mello, Dewing and Cortopassi. Vorden also furnished Locke's first settler, Tin Sin Chan, who left Vorden in 1912 to move to the George Locke family property.

In the early 1890's John Crofton and his wife built a large Eastlake style house just downstream of Vorden. The house was razed by fire only a few years later and the family turned to the four-square shingle house with circling balcony. An old barn still stands between Vorden Road and the spot where the house stood. The barn sits on a tall brick foundation to avoid floodwater.

The Jongeneel van Loben Sels house was named "Amistad" by Moritz and Helen van Loben Sels. The van Loben Sels moved to the house after their house burnt. A large barn accompanied the house. When they moved into Amistad it was overrun by rats driven by high water to the higher ground on which the house sat. They remembered sitting on the porch shooting rats. They shot over 200 in a very short time. "Amistad" was an elegant house. The oak paneling and silver accessories were a beautiful sight. Maurits and Helen raised seven children in the house. Helen wrote children's books, among her many activities. The children were home-tutored. In the 1950's, Helen van Loben Sels opened her house for a tea benefiting the new Courtland Community Church. The van Loben Sels son, Carel, and his wife Elizabeth ("Pam"), lived at Amistad, during which time their first four children were born. After Helen died the large barn burnt. In the 1960's, the house, after valuable parts were removed, was dismantled. Among those removed parts was the staircase, which was re-used in the Gualco home in Walnut Grove.

After the cannery closed, Vorden fell on hard times. Eventually nearly all the commercial businesses closed and, as afore-



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mentioned, the Post Office was consolidated with Locke. Into the late 1940's and early 1950's the River Rat Saloon, with its colorful neon rat, operated and was used as a precinct polling place. In the 1950's the polling place was moved to Laney's Trucking Station on Twin Cities Road. Heringer Farms operated an alfalfa pellet mill on Herzog Road near Vorden Road. It closed after several years when the Far East markets stopped feeding their chicken American alfalfa pellets. Heringer Farms continued to operate a grain elevator on the old cannery site.

Most of Vorden's abandoned buildings fell into disrepair and were demolished. Even the big wooden sign announcing "Vorden" has long disappeared. 🐾

Sources include the River News Herald, Carel van Loben Sels SRDHS meeting program, Courtland High School "La Perita" and other people's recollections.



A scene from the streets of Vorden including part of the Simoni family operations.

March Meeting...continued from page 2

In the 1960's a state program built Oroville Dam, strengthened the Tracy pumps (more water to Southern California.) Not enough water gets around the Delta in the Cross Channel for anything but the Central Valley, therefore a peripheral canal is often mentioned.

The Delta is a leaky reservoir, which allows salt intrusion, however it is usable until late summer. If the Delta is used as a river, and water levels are maintained, storage is destroyed which ruined the East Contra Costa District.

In 1964, the Sacramento River Water Association negotiated with the Federal government on how much water was riparian and how much should be paid for. Finally the Delta was set aside and water is contracted for above Sacramento. State Senator Miller sponsored the Delta Protection Law, which defined the Delta boundary according to water use. (Rio Vista is not in the Delta and does not use Delta water). The Delta does take in Solano County parts (i.e. Dixon.) In the late 1960's the Delta Water Agency was formed. One half of the 11-member board was from other counties. In the 1970's Bud Darsie, Gus Olsen Jr and others formed the North Delta agency to deal with Solano, Sacramento and Yolo Counties. In 1981, the Bureau of Reclamation and State of California signed a contract ensuring the quality and quantity of water available to the Delta (Sherman Island to West Sacramento). The cost is \$1.50 an acre.

In a question period Mr. Bayse made the following comments:

The peripheral canal won't go away and it won't happen. The problem is a balance between supply and salt. North Delta contracts protect the water quality. Some way is needed to move water around the Delta without letting in salt

EBMUD wants water from the American River because it is

better quality than Delta water. The current program supplies water from the Sacramento near West Sacramento.

The State has bought 90% of Sherman Island because it was ruined for farming by salt intrusion.

There is a plan to update federal state flood control.

Appropriate water rights are transferable. Riparian water rights are not. However Los Angeles bought ranches in the Owens Valley with riparian water rights. When the water was not used there it flowed on down to Southern California. They cannot transfer but can alter use.

Levee protection has been bolstered by the state helping the reclamation districts, in case of a levee break (Isleton 1972). The State pays for water to keep the salt out. The legislature decided that it is in the interest of the state to protect the Delta and to have a Delta Protection Program.

Cal Fed professes to agree that farmers can handle the levee maintenance program best. Cal Fed money has been spent on environmental programs and not on levees.

Farmers may be asked to use less water in some years. They would be paid not to use the water, a riparian transfer.

The Delta wetlands project stores water in winter and releases in summer. Unfortunately, seepage affects islands not in the project. A very gradual slope is made on the interior levees of islands that are used to store water. This saves the levees from wear.

The Auburn dam is needed for flood control but there is not yet a market for the water. There are also environmental issues and no more water can be moved through the Delta. It probably won't happen until Sacramento floods. 🐾

Note: Any material errors in this article are due to the reporter—the speaker knows his subject!



SRDHS 2002 SCHEDULE

Meetings are typically held on third Monday of each month. Tentative schedule - Subject to change.

January 21 General Meeting/Annual Potluck
 February 18 Board Meeting
 March 18 General Meeting
 April 15 Board Meeting
 May 20 General Meeting
 June 17 Board Meeting

June Newsletter

July / August summer break
 September 16 General Meeting
 October 21 Board Meeting
 November 18 General Meeting
 December Board Meeting

December Newsletter



WANT TO CONTINUE TO RECEIVE THIS NEWSLETTER?

...Then please remember to remain current on your dues. Non-current members are subject to removal from our mailing list.

Name: _____
 Address: _____
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 E-Mail: _____

- I'm paying \$25 ANNUAL dues for each of the following year(s): 2001 2002 other: _____
- I've enclosed \$150 to become a LIFETIME member.
- I'd like to register as an Honorary Member. (FREE to those members 80 years and older)

Please mail this form with a check payable to the SRDHS to:
 SRDHS - Membership
 PO Box 293, Walnut Grove, CA 95690

2002 DELTA PEAR FAIR



Sunday, July 28th, 2002 in Courtland

Our next
 General Meeting
 is
 Monday,
 September 16th

In the meantime...
enjoy your summer!

Sacramento River Delta Historical Society
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