

Sacramento River Delta Historical Society NEWSLETTER

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

NEWSLETTER

Vol. 20, No. 2

DECEMBER 2000

SOCIETY NOTES

On June 21st the SRDHS was host to the Sacramento County History Consortium, a group made up of representatives from all the local historical venues--Museums, Societies, Archives, etc. The group visited the Jean Harvie Center for a tour of the Resource Center and lunch. During lunch Pete Budnik spoke about attending the Jean Harvie School and Ronnie Maiden previewed Locke. After lunch they toured Locke and then the Alcorn home. We are indebted to the local members: Jayne and Terry Alcorn, June Whalen, Cathy Hemly, Marshall Pyman, Fran and Jim Bates, and Jerry and Robert James, who provided food, set up tables in the auditorium, and hosted. Tom Herzog was also chef. Two guests celebrated their birthdays and supplied wonderful carrot cake for the group. There were 25 guests, and the tours were enjoyed by all. Our deep-felt thanks to all who participated in this successful venture.

* * * * *

The annual Courtland Pear Fair was held on Saturday, July 30. The history of the pear industry exhibit was in the auditorium on the grounds of the former Courtland High School. The historical exhibit was set up by Jim Dahlberg and Tom Herzog with help from Jerry Waterworth, Laurie Herzog, and Fran and Jim Bates. Docenting and table sitting at the exhibit on the day of the fair were June Warhan, Carol Watson, Dorothey Hayes, Jim and Fran Bates, Jim and Barbara Dahlberg, Tom Herzog, Gene Wiseman, Leonard and Lillian Souza, Bill and Margaret Shelton, Maryn Whitney, Clarise Jonson, Jayne and Terry Alcorn, Laurie Herzog, Bob Heringer, Jerry Waterworth, Dennis Leary, and Roy Bergstrom. The exhibit was enjoyed by many people. Our thanks to the helpers.

* * * * *

A good time was had by all who attended the "work night" at the Resource Center on August 21. Terry Alcorn and Leonard Souza had built in some extra shelving, and we spent the evening reorganizing

and restocking. Fran Bates and Clarise Jonson vacuumed the entire cloak room area where so many interesting collections were stored. Terry Alcorn hung pictures and wrestled boxes. Jayne Alcorn surveyed materials and put them in the right pile. June Warhan came in to lend valuable morale support. NOW we all have to take on collections to assess them and index them so they can be used. The Courtland High School pictures and La Peritas are indexed so that anyone who has their picture in these collections can locate them. Let us know if you forgot when you graduated--we can help you. We hope to get all the other collections in the same condition. Stay tuned for other work nights!

* * * * *

The September meeting held at the Ryde Hotel was a SMASH. Charmingly hosted by the management, we heard the history of the hotel from speakers like Leonard Souza, Robert James, and Dennis Leary, then toured the building from top to bottom. They are open for special parties anytime but regularly on Friday and Saturday evenings for dinner and live entertainment, Saturday for lunch and Sunday for brunch! We are much indebted for a wonderful evening. They have really captured the Art Deco ambience and aura of the Twenties and Thirties and were most generous in sharing. Details will appear in a coming issue.

* * * * *

At the May meeting, Walt (Bud) Hoppe shared his research on Point Pleasant. He worked for SMUD as a line superintendent, became a water control expert, and retired in 1989. That's when he began research on Point Pleasant. His family came to Point Pleasant from Germany in 1869. His grandmother and sister were born in Point Pleasant. All the families cooperated, sharing family history, pictures, etc. Mr. Hoppe presented a marvelous slide collection showing documents, scenery, and people of an amazing community that has lived together for over 100 years. (See article p.4)

(continued on page 6)

ANNUAL POTLUCK DINNER
MONDAY JANUARY 15th 6:30 PM
JEAN HARVIE CENTER

ALL 1020 11002
21

November Meeting - ISLETON

We met at the Isleton Museum where Bobbie Collier, Museum Director, explained that they are preserving the contents of the Bing Hong Tong building to be replaced in the original building when it is restored, a project of the Isleton, Brannan, Andrus Island Historical Society. The artifacts are fascinating and beautiful--mostly in Chinese. The Bing Hong Tong Building in Isleton was open from 1944 to 1959. There was a school on the first floor of the building--the children attended the public schools and then the Chinese School afterward and on Saturday. The Museum also has materials from Japanese, Filipino, Italian, and other Caucasian cultures as well.

Dan Szumski explained his oral history project that involves the residents of Isleton's Japantown from 1900 to 1941. This area was roughly from H-F on Main Street. He is adhering to the U.C. Berkeley standards and the tapes will end up in that collection. He is most knowledgeable of the interviewing techniques, and anyone wanting to make oral history tapes would do well to talk with him. Dan recommended history tapes -- interview questions and answers -- as better than journals and diaries. 60-minute tapes are best and videotape is useful, too. The plan includes an interview to become comfortable and to be able to format the tape interview which is checked by the family and they are given copies of the tape.

We were invited to the Szumski house, which is in the H-F area, for refreshments. They have converted a brick store into a most liveable home.

WONG

In 1995 Marion Wong was Grand Marshall of the Isleton celebration of the Chinese New Year. The River News Herald published a story of her life with the title "Local Girl Makes Good", and we include it here.

"Marion Wong was born in Clarksburg in 1916, has been a resident of Isleton for almost 60 years. Her parents are the last of the Gone Sing Owyang and Lum Shee Owyang family. Both parents were from Mainland China.

Her father immigrated to the U.S. in the year 1912 and settled in San Francisco. A year later he decided to settle in the Delta near Clarksburg and Courtland on the Dean's Ranch. Two years later, in 1914, her Mother came to the United States.

Her father, Gone Sing, was a tenant sharecropper. He farmed pears near Clarksburg, Freeport, Walnut Grove, and near Isleton on what is now known as the Martin Ranch.

During the depression years pears were sold below \$20 per ton. Some of the pears were not harvested. There wasn't a profit in farming so her father left farming in 1934. He then moved his family to Locke, a Chinese Delta Community.

Marion came from a family of ten children, seven boys and three girls. Her brothers are Chung Gun, Ah Lum, Charles, William, Henry, Frank and James. Marion's two sisters are Kathryn and Ida. All attended

the local schools in the Delta. While living in Isleton they also attended the Chinese school located at #18 Main Street. In approximately 1933, the school was moved to the first floor of #29 Main Street, the Bing Kong Tong Building. There were about 30 students attending. During those years there were about 32 Chinese families living in Isleton compared to the eight families which remain at the present time. There were 19 Chinese businesses on Main Street Isleton; now there are only three.

On November 24, 1934, the Delta Chinese community met in Isleton to honor General Tsai Ting Kai, commander of the 19th Route Army of the Republic of China. Tsai took worldwide tours, which included the Delta.

Marion met her husband, Sing, while working at Kum Kee Co. as a clerk, which is now Jon's ANC Market on Main Street in Isleton. The following year, 1938, they got married and decided to open their own business. They opened the National Grocery Store, located at #18 Main Street. In 1943, they moved and purchased #14 Main Street and named it the National Café, which is now where Shirley's Boat Cover is located. Their Café business closed after the 1972 Flood.

Besides managing their business at #18 Main Street, Marion worked at various business offices in Isleton. In 1955, she went to work for United Farm Labor Supply Association, Inc. as a secretary until 1966 when the Mexican Bracero Program ended. She then went to work with Isleton Growers, Inc. In 1973 she was employed at Perez and Rodriguez where she remained for many years. Her last employment was with the Delta Farm Labor Service of Clarksburg where she worked until her retirement.

In 1972, during the flood, she moved to Sacramento until her home was rebuilt in 1974.

Her husband, Sing Wong, passed away in 1984.

She has made two trips to Mainland China. In 1985, on her first trip, she was accompanied by her brother, James of Sacramento, and her sister Ida and husband Harry Toy of Daly City. Their plane landed in Hong Kong where they then boarded a Hydrofoil to her parents' village, Daling in Zhonghan Region. The trip took about an hour and a half from Hong Kong. She found herself 8,000 miles away from her home and in a strange new country.

Her parents lived in an old brick house with a courtyard built in 1880. It was exciting for her to see the area. She visited Sun Yet Sing's birth place and the wax museum of the early emperor of 1800 in Choy Han.

In 1991, Marion made another trip to Mainland China with her daughter Sharon and her granddaughter Stephanie. The girls visited their grandparent's village. Between the first and second trip to her parent's village, her nephew completed his modern three-story brick home with an upper deck. They now had a beautiful sight overlooking the valley. The street and the road were now paved. What a big change!

(continued on page 6)

PAINTERSVILLE

Paintersville, located one mile downstream from Courtland, is named for Levi Painter, who settled the site in 1854. Painter, was born in 1833 in Lawrence County, Indiana and moved in 1842 with his family to Missouri where they farmed. He started west in 1849, stopped in Nebraska Territory, traded with the Indians, and returned to Missouri. In 1852-3 he finally arrived in California.

He left St. Joseph, Missouri with two horses in April and arrived in Placerville, California in August, where he mined during 1853. In April 1854, he settled on the land that would become known as Paintersville. When he arrived in the Delta, he worked on a farm for \$50 a month and chopped wood on Sutter Island for \$75 a month. The wood was used for riverboat fuel. In December 1855, he purchased the 120-acre property on which he worked. On this property grew Paintersville.

A few years before Painter arrived at the to-be town site, across the river and upstream half a mile camped Ezekial Merritt who gave his name to Merritt Island and who joined in Fremont's revolt in 1846. One of the last remaining Miwok Indians, Chief Onisbo, lived a short distance downstream of Painter's settlement.

Painter farmed until 1862, when he lost 200 head of cattle and hogs in a winter flood. Eighty of his hogs were ready for market, and after the disaster he forsook farming and focused all his attention of the growing town.

The little town's commercial life centered around the wharf, warehouse, general store, boarding house, saloon, and salmon cannery. The cannery, near the wharf on the downstream side, flourished and Painter built the boarding house to accommodate its workers.

In 1877, for the sum of \$2000 Painter converted the boarding house to Painter's Hall used as a public hall and a dance hall. He later converted it again to his residence and moved the building to its present site, placing it on a brick foundation. The Native Sons of the Golden West met in the hall before moving to Courtland around 1888 (and ultimately to Elk Grove in the 1950's).

But Painter is best known for his post-hole bank, the first "bank" in the Delta for a number of years. The story is best told in a "Delta Herald" article: "There wasn't a bank on every corner when Levi Painter landed on the east bank of the Sacramento River, a couple of miles upstream of Steamboat Slough in 1832.

And thereby hangs a tale that has been told and retold, with many an embellishment, but always guaranteed to bring a smile of amusement.

Levi Painter was a trader of the old school and soon he had a river landing, a store, a saloon, and a hotel. His little settlement soon was known up and down the river as Paintersville and Levi Painter prospered.

While Levi was earnestly trying to double his capitol as often as possible, he acquired a reputation for honesty that brought more and more settlers to his store and his saloon. Because there was a slight risk in

carrying large sums of money in those days of the Argonauts, men were constantly devising safety for their wealth. It was natural that they should turn to Levi Painter as a friend who might hold and guard their coins and dust against the perils of the trails and rough towns.

Always ready to accommodate his customers, Levi Painter soon faced a problem that might turn into disaster for him if he didn't solve it—but quick. The lawless element would sooner or later learn that he was taking care of his customers' money and that could mean a stick-up at best or a bullet in the gullet if anything went wrong. Levi Painter couldn't see robbery or gunplay as part of his activities.

So he built a fence. Every twenty feet he placed a big post and folks agreed that he was really getting somewhere. What they didn't know was that was the first Post Hole Bank in California.

The Bank operated only at night—with no moonlight. When man and beast were sound asleep Levi Painter would slip from his store and head for the fence. Up would come a post, down would go a can filled with coin and dust and the post would be replaced. Nothing could be safer or more simple.

The early settlers had security for their funds—Levi Painter had freedom from worry. Everybody was happy."

In 1879, Painter converted 3¼ acres to saleable lots. A ferry connected Paintersville with Sutter Island. The "paper town" of Onisbo was platted directly opposite across the river an Sutter Island and a store was built, but Onisbo didn't prosper. While overseeing his little town, he ventured into farming again. He raised vegetables and added fruit trees in 1865, and in 1880 he began breeding horses and mules.

Painter married twice. By Mary McDermott, his first wife, he had a son and two daughters. His son, William, worked as an engineer on the Southern Pacific Transportation Company riverboat "Modoc," which was one of two designated mail packets on the river run. Mary Painter died in 1867 and was interred in the Franklin Cemetery, then known as Georgetown. In 1887, he married Maggie van Auken. Apparently, after Painter's death, his family moved to the Elk Grove area. But Paintersville lived on.

By 1900, Paintersville had a grocery store, saloon, a clothing store (which sold work clothes, shoes, etc.), and a well driller: Johnny Wraa. The saloon and clothing store were operated by Joe Enos. (Enos' son Joe became a part owner of Pureta Sausage Company in Sacramento). The old store and saloon featured a pole shed to shelter horses from the weather and was demolished in the 1950's. By then it had been converted to a house. Johnny Wraa's house and some of his ships remain. Additionally, there remain several early cottages. A few new houses were built in the 1920's, 1930's and later. Downstream of the ferry slip and later the bridge, squatted fishermen's shanties and moored to the river bank small arks (scow houseboats). Some of the early fishermen were Greek, others were German or Portuguese. Commercial salmon fishing using Missouri drift nets continued in

PAINTERSVILLE (continued)

the river until outlawed in the 1950's. Into the 1950's Vierra's Garage sat at road level near the bridge approach. Built before 1923, and perhaps as a store or hall, it was supported on stilts which rested on concrete pads. Remnants of the old wharf were easily visible until the levee was improved about 1960. In 1924, the bridge was opened with fanfare and ceremony. In 1918 J.M. Buckley invested in the town. Buckley's Station became Paintersville's primary business. The name Buckley's became synonymous with Paintersville. To quote the "Delta Herald" again: When the "new bridge was built across the river at Paintersville, it became a logical place for a trucking headquarters. The orchards and fields on both sides of the river were but a short haul and in 1918 J.M. Buckley located at Paintersville and engaged in the hauling business.

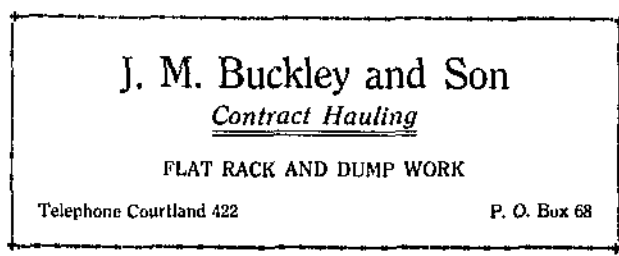
Soon the firm became known as J.M. Buckley and son, the son being George, who is known to every farmer and processor up and down the river.

The Buckley's have a reputation of being cranky about their equipment. From the original fleet of 1 GMC truck, they have constantly kept their rolling stock abreast of the latest developments in the automotive field. A modern shop is maintained at their terminal at Paintersville and Buckley trucks are given thorough and frequent checks to keep them rolling without delays.

This type of equipment, with special bodies for the various products of the Delta, has seen the Buckley business grow, until they now operate eighteen trucks on a high constancy. Competing, as they do, under rates that are set by the State Utilities Commission, the Buckley's believe that their plus for customers is the high efficiency of their equipment, central terminal location, and the type of drivers they have developed. Truck drivers are mighty important men in the Buckley organization and that is the result of a policy that the Buckley's, father and son, have fostered through the years. It is paying off too, in holding together good men through the years who believe that what is good for the Buckley's is good for them."

The Buckley family lived in the boarding house/hall/residence. They later moved to Courtland. In the early years of operation they ran a boarding house for their employees out of their residence. George ran the business until his son-in-law Jack Saunders took over and then Jack's sons worked in the business. The Buckley family operated the trucking business until it closed in 1987, a casualty of the worldwide farming depression.

(Prepared by Kathleen G. Hutchinson)

**May Meeting - POINT PLEASANT**

At the May meeting Walt (Bud) Hoppe recounted the history of Point Pleasant. Point Pleasant is located in South-Central Sacramento County in Franklin Township. It is more precisely located south of Franklin and west of Franklin Blvd. (Once known as Lower Stockton Blvd.) I-5 bisects the settlement. It can be reached by either Lambert Road or Point Pleasant Road.

Originally the area was Miwok Indian land. Hoppe said that later the land was a part of a Mexican land grant, the southern boundary of which was the Cosumnes River, but Thompson and West in their "History of Sacramento County 1880" claim there was not a land grant in Franklin Township. Nevertheless, along the Cosumnes River in 1846 John Murphy operated a horse corral. During the California Bear Flag Revolt in 1846, John C. Fremont (leader of the insurrection) sent his trusted subordinate Captain Ezekiel Merritt (Merritt Island) to raid the corral. Merritt took 170 horses, the entire "Caballada" of Lt. Francisco Arce of the Mexican Army. Later Murphy joined the revolt.

Most of the settlers of Point Pleasant had earlier migrated from and within 150 miles of Friesland in North Western Germany. Friesland, which fronted on the North Sea, is wonderful dairy land. Many of the early settlers first settled in Missouri before venturing west. The land on which Point Pleasant was settled was equally fine dairy land.

In 1852 a settler named Anderson became a legal squatter. Shortly thereafter the Hogoboom family arrived from Troy, N.Y. In 1857 John Erhardt settled. In 1869 Hoppe, Benedix and Fry/Frey. Other families trickled in: Korn, Ettinger, Para, Borden, Sprock, Schmidt, Miller Buscher, in 1900 Cosner, more Spocks, more Schmidtsas, as well as Hardin, McKutcheon, Schmitz, Rusch, in 1920 Knipple. The families are thoroughly intermarried, which has led to the remark that their genealogy is more like a hedge than a tree.

Point Pleasant School District was established in 1866, the church (German) Evangelical Church of North America in 1885, and a store in 1916. Interestingly, there was never a post office established but instead residents used Franklin Post Office. Point Pleasant social activities centered on the school and the church.

Dairying was the major occupation. Most of the milk was sold in Sacramento. The milk cans were delivered by horse and buggy which were driven to town on the Lower Stockton Road. During floods the cans were taken by rowboat to the Richland (Hood) landing and were loaded on a riverboat to Sacramento. Dairymen supplemented their income in winter by market hunting. The shot birds were taken to Sacramento by the same means as the milk cans. After the railroad was built, a train was flagged by Lambert Road and the birds loaded on board for Sacramento.

Probably the most famous resident of Point Pleasant was Alexander Hamilton Willard, the oldest survivor of the Lewis and Clarke Expedition. Willard died at Point Pleasant in 1865 at age 87 and is buried in nearby Franklin Cemetery. (See article on Franklin, p.5.)

(Prepared by Kathleen G. Hutchinson)

FRANKLIN

Closely associated with Point Pleasant was Franklin. About 4 miles north of Point Pleasant it was first known as Six-Mile house after the lodging built by a Mr. Prewitt in 1853-4 on what was then known as the Lower Stockton Road (Franklin Blvd. today). The settlement later was known as Georgetown after Andrew George who opened his "hotel" Franklin House in 1856.

Franklin house was demolished in 1879, as was the Six-Mile house, owned by a Mr. Dennison, by 1880. John Klotz, a dairyman, owned land adjacent to the settlement. In 1880 Thomas Anderson, who settled in 1866, was the Justice of the Peace. H. Schlutins was the first postmaster, and served for 10 years. Franklin School, built for \$3500, opened in 1876 as a "high" school but was converted to a grammar school in 1878. Church services were held in the school house. In the early 20th century the grammar school offered a one-year baccalaureate or commercial course which drew students from as far away as Clarksburg.

The Franklin Grange, established on January 9, 1874, listed as members William Johnston, (California State Senator), Troy Dye (later County Administrator and convicted murderer), J.M. Stephenson and other Richland, Franklin and Point Pleasant farmers and dairymen. The Grange Hall, otherwise known as Franklin Hall, was a one and a half story structure. It was a well-known social focal point for upper Delta residents who came from as far away as Courtland and Clarksburg. The Grange hosted family dances at the hall and entire families attended, children included.

Dancing was held until midnight, after which everyone retired upstairs where the women had prepared a midnight supper: "all you can eat for 50¢". Early Upper Deltans fondly remembered the Franklin Dances. A florist shop occupies the old hall today.

The 20th Century added a few houses, a gas station, a general grocery store, an enlarged school, and the unforgettable King's Roller Rink.

Today there is a massive housing development planned for just east of the Union Pacific Railroad tracks which cross just north of town. Looking to the future Franklin could become a community center or an historic district.

Many Deltans, some as far away as Walnut Grove, are interred in Franklin Cemetery which is still in use today. Troy Dye is interred in an unmarked grave next to his brother John. Also interred there is the aforementioned A.H. Willard of Point Pleasant.

(Prepared by Kathleen G. Hutchinson)



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To order a copy of "Historic Houses of the Sacramento River Delta", send \$12.95 per copy (mail order) to SRDHS, P.O. Box 293, Walnut Grove, CA 95690.

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Do you know someone, family or friend, who would enjoy hearing about and supporting the Sacramento River Delta Historical Society? It's fun to be part of preserving and sharing our local history.

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The Sacramento River Delta Historical Society publishes the SACRAMENTO RIVER DELTA HISTORICAL SOCIETY (SRDHS) NEWSLETTER twice a year (December and June).

25

SOCIETY NOTES (continued from p. 1)

The sesquicentennial period is over and we are embarking on a series of articles about the towns, settlements, hamlets, and villages of the area. We would welcome any contributions from our readers--family histories, house histories. We know there is a wealth of material out there! This issue is primarily about Paintersville but we have included some on Point Pleasant and Franklin. The Ryde Hotel material graciously supplied by Roy O'Conner will be included in the next issue on Ryde.

* * * * *

The November meeting, arranged by Jim Tracy, was a tour of the Isleton Museum led by the Director, Bobbie Collier. Dan Samuski told some of the history of the Japanese people in Isleton. We hope to return to the museum at 60 Main Street, Isleton, when it is opened in May, on Saturdays and Sundays from 1:00 to 4:30 p.m. The museum is usually open from May through September. Our thanks to Clarise Jonson and Barbara Dahlberg who contributed tasty refreshments.

* * * * *

Has anyone seen the audiotape of the Church Meeting? Someone borrowed it after the meeting and it has not been seen since. Please look around and return it if you find it. The Resource Center will NOT be open on Tuesday, January 2nd.

WONG (continued from p.2)

Her three brothers, Charles, Frank and James, all served in the military during World War II.

Marion has a son, Donald, who graduated from the University of Utah, and a daughter Sharon, who graduated from the College of the Pacific in Stockton, California. Both children are pharmacists and work for Kaiser Permanente in Oakland, Calif. Donald's wife, Kimm, is a school teacher in Concord, Calif. and Sharon's husband, Jerry, is a Lab Technician. He also works for Kaiser Permanente.

Two grandsons have graduated from the University of California at Berkeley and majored in civil engineering. Antony received his master's in Business Administration from Cal Poly. Granddaughter Susanne will receive her degree in Environmental Engineering in May. Grandson Corey is attending San Jose State and granddaughter Stephanie is attending Mt. Diablo College in Pleasant Hill.

After retiring, Marion has spent most of her time traveling, visiting with friends and family, and gardening in her home in Isleton. She, as always, still provides her services as an interpreter to the Chinese families who are limited in English.

Marion has kept herself busy and active most of her life.

(An article from The River News Herald Wednesday February 22, 1995, p.7. We are happy to report that Marion Wong currently resides in Isleton. 12/2000)

BITS OF HISTORY

The **BEAR FLAG** was first raised over the old fort at Sonoma on a June day in 1846.

The flag was sewed together in the front room of the barracks by Benjamin Dewell. Bill Todd painted the bear and star with black ink.

Red, white, and blue were used because they were the colors of the U.S. flag. The bear was the strongest animal in this part of the country. The words on the flag express our desire for independence: "A bear stands his ground always, and as long as the stars shine we stand for the cause."

The **BANK OF RIO VISTA** was granted its charter 96 years ago on April 12, 1904. Its assets grew from \$50 thousand in 1904 to over \$78 million today.

The **SACRAMENTO UNION** stopped publishing in early 1994. The newspaper began as a four-page paper March 19, 1851, and continued through financial ups and downs for nearly 143 years. In its early years the paper paid Mark Twain to write four letters a month from the Sandwich Islands (Hawaii). He was paid \$20 a letter.

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26