

OLD BRISTOL HISTORICAL SOCIETY

A Biannual Newsletter of the Society – Fall 2022

A Message From Our President

This being my first such message, I would like to start by introducing myself. My name is Mark Ziarnik. Many people also know me by my nickname, Zig. I am not a historian, but Bristol's history fascinates me, and I love working with people and teams to plan and execute projects. I felt both honored and humbled this past July 31st when my colleagues on the OBHS Board elected me to succeed my renowned predecessor, Bobby Ives. His are enormous shoes to fill; I am not sure that anyone could. Fortunately, Bobby remains on our Board and is very active in OBHS. Thank you, Bobby. I sincerely appreciate your advice and support.

These are transformational times for OBHS. While the repair and restoration of the mill building will likely take a few more years, great progress has been made in 2021 and 2022. We aspire to have portions ready for occupancy in 2023. OBHS is now engaged in planning for the contents of the museum that will reside there, one that visitors and locals of all ages will hopefully want to come back to again and again, year after year.

2022 also saw the official opening of the Bristol History Center, with two fascinating exhibits on display, a reading room for visitors researching their local family history, and beautiful container plantings outside. As with the mill, plans are in the works for next year's exhibits, and we expect to have the archival vault operational this spring.

On behalf of the entire OBHS family, I want to thank our many supporters who have helped make all this possible: our members, volunteers, donors, those who have contributed archival materials, local contractors, and more. We could not do it without you. You are shining examples of what makes Bristol the close-knit community that it is.

As many as we have, we can always use more volunteers. If you have any interest in getting involved and would like to learn more about the opportunities, please let us know. You'll be enriching our community and it's a great way to meet people!

I wish you all happy holidays and a bright New Year.

Mark

Officers and Directors of the Old Bristol Historical Society, July 2022 - July 2023

President: Mark Ziarnik Vice President: Jody Bachelder Treasurer: Don Means

Assistant Treasurer: Chuck Farrell

Secretary: Belinda Osier

Directors: Phil Averill, Margaret Hayter, Robert Ives, Edward Kitson, Pat Porter, Warren Reiss, Robert McLaughlin, Keith Mestrich,

Anne K. Nord

New Board Member - Keith Mestrich

Old Bristol Historical Society is pleased to announce that Keith Mestrich, a New Harbor resident, has accepted the board's invitation to join its Board of Directors. Keith has over thirty years of experience in financial, labor, and non-profit sectors. He is a founding member of the Aspen Institute's Finance Fellowship, was, until recently, CEO and President of Amalgamated Bank, and is founding partner of a venture company designing a financial services platform for low-income individuals. He is a participant in the Aspen Global Leadership Network, the Treasurer and Board member of the Frances Perkins Center, and member of Bristol's Budget Committee.

Bristol History Center Opens! By Belinda Osier



Visitors also got to view the new reading and research room as well as our long-anticipated climate-controlled vault awaiting its final touches of a door and shelving.

As we grow our collections for this new center, OBHS would like to recognize and thank all those who donated or loaned items this year. 2022 DONORS: Phil Averill, Jody Bachelder, Rebecca Cohen, Lori Crook, Rob Davidson, Nancy Dodge, Debbie Gilbert, Christopher Havey, Larry & Margaret Hayter, Josephine Howell, Richard & Valrae Huffman, Robert Ives, Gus Konitsky, Craig Leeman, Pam Lutte, James Lyon, Linda McLain, Ellen Miller, John Neff, Bonnie McGregor Otis, George Paine, Jeff Pickett, Pat Porter, Lyn Prentice, Pam Rice, Jim & Joan Richards, Alvin Schaut, Scott Sutter, Sandy Thorn, Dennis & Sue Wennerberg. 2022 LOANERS: Bethiah Callahan, Mike Emery, Robert Ives, Robert Klein, Mollie Perley. THANK YOU!

A long-time dream of OBHS was finally realized this past July with the opening of the new Bristol History Center. The inaugural exhibit titled "Then and Now: The Villages of Bristol" featured enlargements of early 20th century photo postcards accompanied by contemporary images taken from the same perspective. A second exhibit (that will be further developed and eventually displayed in the Mill Museum) featured Bristol industries of the past.



One of the images shared with OBHS this year. Washington School House, Round Pond Maine, ca. 1908. Snapshot from the Bethiah Callahan Collection.

The Mill Report by Phil Averill



Ed Blaiklock has left for the season and is expected to return in February, assuming we can raise sufficient funds. He has completed structural repairs to the west (back) wall and roof. He will do some minor repairs to the east (road) side and roof upon his return. We have contracted with ABL Roofing to do the sidewall and roof shingling. As of November 4th, the west wall has been reshingled with cedar shingles and window frames installed. They should be starting on the roof in mid-November. After having been salvaged and refurbished by Zandie Wilson, windows that are similar to the ones in old photos of the mill are being installed in new frames built by Roger Panek.

Remembering Samoset

by Jody Holmes Bachelder

Author of Here First: Samoset and the Wawenock of Pemaquid, Maine

Growing up in New Harbor I was aware of Samoset, of course, but what did I really know? His walk into Plymouth is famous, and I knew there was something about a land deed. The local Indigenous people, the Wawenock, were never talked about so I simply didn't think about them. They weren't around to remind us that they had lived on the peninsula first, or to tell us what had actually happened to them. It wasn't until six years ago when I was living far from Bristol that the idea of writing a book about Samoset began to form in my mind. I've been on a fascinating journey to learn about him ever since.

It quickly became clear that the walk into Plymouth Plantation and the land deed were only small parts of his life story. Samoset began life completely independent from European influence. He was probably born around 1590, when the Wawenock still hunted with bows and arrows and used tools made of stone, bone, or shell. Charred corn and a stone pestle found at Pemaquid suggest they may have been growing crops, even though agriculture was a challenge because temperatures were a few degrees cooler at that time. Samoset spent his summers in Pemaquid where the fishing was excellent, and moved inland for better hunting in the winter. The Wawenock lived sustainably, never taking more resources than they needed to live a comfortable life.

Their lives were upended when Europeans arrived. A few explorers sailed the Maine coast in the 16th century, but their first interaction with Europeans may not have been until 1605 when an Englishman named George Waymouth spent several days in Muscongus Bay. After a few pleasant meetings where they shared food and did some trading, the English kidnapped five Wawenock men and took them to England. (Samoset was not one of them.) Their lives would never be the same.

Only two of the five men would return to Pemaquid, and then only because the English hoped to use them as interpreters and agents when they came back to build a fortified trading settlement. This was the Popham Colony, and the Wawenock played an important role in its history as well as its demise. As significant as this was, they had bigger concerns.

In 1607, the same year the colony was founded, a war erupted between many of the coastal Maine tribes and the Mi'kmaq of Nova Scotia, and the Wawenock were swept up in it. Samoset, who was around 17 years old, would have been old enough to fight. The Mi'kmaq used a secret weapon provided to them by French colonists: muskets. This was a turning point in Wabanaki history, because once guns were introduced as a weapon of war everyone needed them to be on equal footing. Rather than being able to drive off the English as they may have

wanted, the Wawenock — and the Wabanaki generally — now needed their guns. They were forced into an alliance.

The Popham Colony lasted only a year, but the English soon came back to focus on fishing. It was a profitable enterprise, and New Harbor, Damariscove, and Monhegan Island quickly became lucrative fishing hubs. The fishermen also brought European goods with them to do some trading on the side with the Wawenock. Beaver furs were especially valued because they were used to make felt hats, which were very popular in Europe. Unfortunately these interactions came at a great cost to the Wawenock, who had no immunity to the diseases the fishermen carried. During the epidemic of 1616-1619, which became known as the Great Dying, it's believed that the Wawenock suffered an almost 80% death rate. The village of Pemaquid had 100 people strong before the war and the epidemic; now, their number dwindled to perhaps 20.

Samoset survived and, as sagamore, the burden of guiding his people through the trauma and recovery lay on his shoulders. So it was an extraordinary time for him to leave them and go to Plymouth. Why he went is a mystery that we may never solve, but his role there was not only significant, but pivotal. Samoset established trust with the English settlers before introducing them to the Wampanoag, and helped them forge a peace treaty that lasted for decades. Afterward he returned home and once again took up the responsibilities of leading his people.

For the rest of his life — over three decades — he remained on the Pemaquid peninsula, watching over the changes as more and more settlers arrived. No longer independent, the Wawenock now spent their time hunting, trapping, and processing hides for trade. Hardships followed — pirate attacks, an outbreak of smallpox, a deadly hurricane — but friendships too, including a closeness with the blacksmith John Brown and his family. This relatively peaceful time would last until the outbreak of King Philip's War in 1675, the first of six Anglo-Wabanaki wars that would see the Wawenock permanently driven off their lands.

Today there is little to commemorate Samoset or the Wawenock. A 100-year-old monument in New Harbor highlights his meeting with the Plymouth settlers and the 1625 deed wherein he allegedly sold the Pemaquid peninsula to John Brown. If true, this was the first land transaction between an Indigenous person and a European in North America. But we should regard the deed with caution. The original cannot be found or validated and may have been a forgery. Even if it were legitimate, I wonder if Samoset would want this to be his legacy. Maybe it's time to rethink how we pay homage to the people who lived on the peninsula for thousands of years, caring for it and loving it as we do.

Jeanne Rottner's GIFT TO POSTERITY

by Phyllis and Robert Ives

Few have done more in recent years to contribute to the history of Bristol than Jeanne Rottner.

Like many of us, Jeanne had deep family roots here in Pemaquid, going back to the original Col. David Dunbar settlers who first came here in 1729. She wasn't born here, but came every summer to stay with her grandparents who had property to the west and north of the Pemaquid Falls Mill. And she wasted no time in moving here with her husband, Al, when they retired in the '70s. There was a vast trove of information, records, documents, and notes that her grandfather, Richard Fossett, had put aside in his barn and attic, including piles of information that she went through, organized, preserved, and added to whenever the opportunity arose.

For the past several years, she shared many of these documents with OBHS archivists so that a permanent record could be created and made accessible. Included in these were several ledger books from the mill going back to 1845. These provided



tremendous insights into the actual operation, and will be instrumental in building the Mill Museum in the next few years.

History was not Jeanne's only interest. She caned chair seats, embroidered, crafted, played golf and bridge, and was a member of the Neighborly Club. If you came to call, Jean would greet you at the door perfectly put together for company, despite being physically limited by COPD in her later years.

And now, like all before her, Jeanne has left this life. She died peacefully in her home on the Bristol Road on Friday, October 21. The same house that was home to mill builder Robert Given and later owner Oakman Ford.

We wish to thank Jeanne's family — daughter Nancy Jane, son-in-law Richard Golojuch and grandchildren Mathew and Kathryn — for sharing in Jeanne's life and her love of Bristol history with all of us.

We share in their loss.

Riparian Area by Anne K. Nord



The new berm established this autumn to protect the Pemaquid River.

After many discussions and various ideas were floated around, the grounds committee established a berm in front of the Pemaquid Falls Mill and along the Pemaquid River. This small area of land adjacent to the Pemaquid River has been designed to enhance the OBHS property, but most importantly, to support the health of the river. Water is a limited resource and our actions impact water quality and availability.

To protect the water as it flows along the property. It was important to be sure the plantings chosen were native and environmentally friendly to all: fish, birds, animals, insects, and people too.

A riparian area has three levels with different root depths that increase infiltration, help capture nutrients, sediments, and pollutants, slowing the water runoff and reducing erosion.

The first level is the birch trees that will provide shade and deep roots to anchor the soil. The second level consists of medium

height bushes that are native to this area. The third level plants are shorter.

Two bushes that might catch your attention in this season are the red chokeberry and black chokeberry. Their name might cue you in to what people thought of these bushes many years ago. The berries, bright red and deep black respectively are edible but very astringent. These native berries were used in making sauces that might mask the taste of fish or wild meats.



Aronia arbutifolia, "Brilliantissima" is a red chokeberry that

will provide interesting foliage and light pink flowers in spring followed by red berries. It is a deciduous bush. The birds love these berries and will flock to these bushes when the berries are ripe and edible. The foliage has perfect fall color.



Black chokeberry can also be used as an edible fruit crop although the fruit is very astringent and acidic. The high-antioxidant fruit is used in baking and to make jams and jellies as they contain a high level of pectin. A syrup, tea, or juice might help with diarrhea, bloating, heartburn and stomach ulcers, a virtual pharmacy right in your back yard. In addition to providing winter food for birds, dried berries were used in making pemmican. Do note, the seeds contain hydrogen cyanide. This toxin can be easily detected by the bitter taste. In small quantities it is shown to stimulate respiration, improve digestion, and suppress cancer growth. But it is not recommended to be eaten in today's culture.

More comprehensive information about the plantings can be found on a wall display within the Historical Society building.

The 1765 Fund

Old Bristol Historical Society is introducing the 1765 Fund . . . an endowment program that our members and friends can use to help ensure that our work preserving and sharing Bristol history will continue long into the future.

Donations to the endowment can take many forms, including cash, stock, bonds, real estate property, insurance proceeds, valuable goods, and more. The endowment will continue to be conservatively invested, with the proceeds being used to fund the OBHS mission.

Donations can be structured in various ways to meet your needs, such as an immediate gift, a gift from which you may need to draw income during your lifetime, or a future bequest as part of your estate plan.

The 1765 Fund allows you to specify the purpose for which you would like your donation be used, or you may instead entrust OBHS to use the proceeds of your donation where they are most needed.

The 1765 Fund Donation Acceptance Policy details the many types of donations OBHS can accept. The 1765 Fund Investment Policy ensures that your donation will be safely and conservatively managed through OBHS's partnership with HM Payson, an investment advisory firm founded in 1845 and now conservatively managing \$4.4 billion on behalf of its 3,400 clients found in 22 states. Copies of both policies are available to you at your request.

A member of the OBHS Development Committee would be happy to meet with you and, if you wish, your personal financial adviser. We look forward to you joining us on this mission.

You can reach us . . .

By phone: 207-677-6011

By email: oldbristolhistoricalsociety03@gmail.com

By U.S. mail: The 1765 Fund, The Old Bristol Historical Society, P.O. Box 87, Bristol, ME 04539

THE 1765 FUND. PRESERVING BRISTOL'S PAST...FOR THE FUTURE

From a Distant Shore

by Russ Lane



It was part story, part mystery, and as a young boy lobstering with my father it seemed he would tell it to me every time we rounded the end of Pemaquid Point. It happened sometime during World War II when my father was just a boy himself. Two British fighter planes collided near Kresge's Point, sending both pilots crashing to the ocean below. There were no survivors. End of story.

However, over the years, parts of the story have somehow found me – piecing themselves together – almost all on their own. The date was June 7, 1944 and the world woke to the news of the D-Day invasion on the beaches of Normandy. My uncle, nine-year-old Edwin Miller, could not wait for the day to be over. Tomorrow was the start of summer vacation at the one-room McKinley School in Pemaguid Falls.

It was early afternoon when four Royal Navy corsairs taxied onto the runway at Brunswick Naval Air Station. They were part of two British squadrons temporarily based there for advanced flight training. For the past week they had been practicing take-offs and landings on the escort carrier

USS Charger operating in the waters off Maine. Taking to the sky, they followed along the coast until they reached John's Bay. Dropping down over the water, they tightened their formation and started up the Pemaquid River.

Back at McKinley School, the afternoon lesson was interrupted by a loud growling sound coming from the open windows in the rear of the classroom. Some of the students raced back to investigate, while others hid under their desks. There, coming low over the water, were four British fighter planes – flying wing tip to wing tip. Bearing down directly on the school, they rose up off the water gaining altitude to clear the oncoming trees. With a deafening roar the planes blasted overhead causing many of the students to cover their ears. As quickly as they came, they were gone.



It wasn't until later in the afternoon, when my Uncle Edwin arrived home from school, that he heard the terrible news: Once out over Muscongus Bay, the planes banked to the south hugging the shoreline. Passing by the lighthouse they broke formation and paired off in two's to practice attack maneuvers. Without warning, two of the planes collided off Kresge's Point, sending both aircraft spiraling to the ocean below. Eyewitnesses reported seeing the airplanes each lose a wing on the way down. Both exploded on impact.

In the aftermath the only remnant of the mishap was an oil slick forming on top of the water. Of the two remaining planes, one continued to circle overhead while the other radioed for help. Other fighter planes from the base soon arrived perhaps as much to honor their fallen comrades as to offer assistance. A Coast Guard boat along with a seaplane began an extensive search but it was determined that no one could have survived.

The names of the pilots were withheld until the next of kin could be notified. That's where the newspapers stop - declaring it - END of story. But, in truth, the story was far from over.

Two families—one in Alcester, England and the other in Kaipara Flats, New Zealand—would soon receive the same heartbreaking news: the loss of a son, the loss of a brother. Their lives would never be the same.

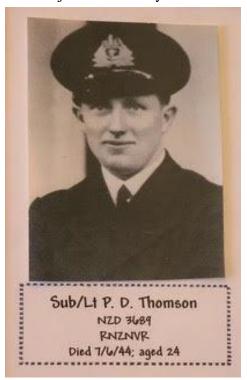
During the last years of World War II over 3,000 Royal Navy pilots underwent rigorous combat flight training in Maine. On average, one plane crash occurred every day which resulted in 143 fatalities.

As a boy, the loss of two British fighter pilots off Pemaquid brought the war to my father's front doorstep. Over the years he rarely missed an opportunity to share their story with my sister and me until his passing in 2017.

Then, in February of 2022 while still trying to do research, I came across an email that could possibly lead to the family of one of the pilots. A connection was made half a world away. In New Zealand a niece, Maureen, was quick to respond that her mother had been both sister and best friend growing up to her brother, pilot Sub/Lt Percy Donald Thomson. Mo (short for Maureen) also informed me that her mom had just celebrated her 100th birthday. So, standing in for my father, I had the privilege to inform them that even after all these years her brother's sacrifice and the heartache her family had endured, had not been forgotten.



Mo then joined me in my search to find more about the other



pilot who died that tragic day off of Pemaquid Point. She soon connected us with the family members of 20-year-old Sub/Lt Edwin Howard Portman. It didn't take long for her to get on a plane in New Zealand making her way to Alcester, England to meet them in person.

And I too had a visit of my own in autumn 2022 when a grand nephew of the pilot from New Zealand, along with his wife and two children, met me at Pemaquid Point where their great uncle's tragic death occurred some 78 years before. Proof that history isn't just telling stories, it is about connecting the past with the hearts of today and the hands that will shape tomorrow.

Russie Lane lives in Bristol, Maine. This, as well as other stories on video can be found

at russielane.com and https://www.youtube.com/@russielane207

The Unbelievable Importance of New Harbor in Early Colonial History by Pete Hope

My hypothesis is that New Harbor was the first port in English America. There is no archeological proof of this but there is plenty of evidence to back it up and I will stick to this until I am proven wrong.

Neill De Paoli wrote in "Life on the Edge: Community and trade on the Anglo-American Periphery, Pemaquid, Maine, 1610-1689" that even before 1600 some of England's leading men were interested in exploring and colonizing the Midcoast of Maine. The early 17th Century voyages of Bartholomew Gosnold, Martin Pring, George Weymouth and John Smith, all reporting on the fur, fish and forest resources of the area, really stirred up this interest into action. Smith's voyage in 1614 is very critical to my hypothesis.

In 1606 King James I granted two charters to these leading men. English possessions between the 34th and 45th parallels were divided between the Jamestown and Plymouth companies. Sir Ferdinando Gorges and Sir John Popham took the lead in the Plymouth Company. They outfitted two ships with supplies and 124 settlers and set sail for the Maine coast in the spring of 1607. This was before Jamestown. For some inexplicable reason they chose the western mouth of the Kennebec River to plant the Popham Colony. This location was about the worst possible choice. The winter was really tough and settlers died including their leader, George Popham. Unlike at Plymouth 12 years later they had no help from the Indians. Weymouth had kidnapped five Wawenock in 1605 and although they were returned to Maine, there was lingering resentment. After Popham's death the colony had lousy leadership and the survivors couldn't wait to return to England in the spring of 1608.

In 1608, after the failure of the Popham colony, Sir John Popham's son, Sir Francis, sent one of his father's ships, "The Gift of God," under Captain Williams, to New Harbor to begin a fur trade. We know this from Captain John Smith's "Discovery of New England" which he wrote in 1616. In the early spring of 1614 Smith with two ships sailed to America and explored the coast from the Bay of Fundy to Cape Cod. He spent about six months in the Midcoast. In early April he was anchored at "Monhiggin" He wrote that: "Right against us in the main (New Harbor) was a ship of Sir Francis Popham, that had such acquaintance hauving used for many years onely that Porte, that most there (the fur trade) was had by him." De Paoli wrote that this time there was a great demand in Europe for beaver, martin, ermine and fox fur. Hubbard wrote that the area "...was the great fur

market of the country." It should be noted that Popham, like Gorges, never came over here.

Smith's use of the word port which Hubbard called Porte Popphames is very significant and a basis for my hypothesis. Smith had sailed from many ports and knew one when he saw it. A port, now or then, is used for export and import and needs to have an infrastructure to carry that out. At that time it meant, at a minimum, a wharf, a warehouse and places for the agent and workers to stay. Also, fishing was carried out in New Harbor then and that meant stages, a storage building for salt and another for the cured fish,



Harbor View. ca. 1925. Detail of a postcard from the Donald Vigue Postcard Collection.

wharf and dwellings. It is probable that a carpenter, cooper and maybe a blacksmith lived there. Some of the fishermen who were from England's West Country around Bristol may have overwintered and the seasonal fishermen also needed dwellings. New Harbor around 1614 was a busy place indeed.

In 1871, long time New Harbor resident Joshua Thompson made a sworn deposition to Justice of the peace, Francis Wheeler. Here is a summary of what he said. When he was young the north side of the harbor was heavily wooded. It was clear cut and 17 cellar holes in two irregular lines, parallel to the harbor were visible. There was charred wood on all of them. (The settlements of the peninsular were all burned down during King Philip's War in 1676.) On the top of the hill there was a 50' x 51' five foot thick stone foundation that: "appears to be the remains of what looks like a fortification." Around the cellar hole Thompson and others found 'pipes, pieces of crockery, hatchets, pincers, etc." Near the shore 32 pounds of shot was found. 52 pounds of varying sizes of shot from musket balls to number 2 shot was found. Most interesting is an irregular piece of lead with the date AD 1610 on it. Thompson sold this to a man from Marblehead for \$5. He later sold it to John Henry Cartland. No one in the late 19th and early 20th centuries did more to uncover and promote Pemaquid's early history than Cartland. He spearheaded a drive to rebuild Fort William Henry. These artifacts were all English imports. There is no archeological or documentary evidence for this but to me it is only logical that all these remains are from the early trading/fishing post in the port of New Harbor.

A good question is how long did New Harbor keep this historic role? In "Here First" Jody Batchelder wrote that the Mi'Makq war of 1607-1617 cut down the Wawenock population but nothing like "The Great Dying" from 1616-1619. This was some kind of a plague, maybe smallpox, that Indians had no immunity to. It devastated coastal populations from Penobscot Bay to Narraganset Bay. Estimates range from 67% to 98% of the population were wiped out. This ended the fur trade, at least temporarily. Samoset and some of his Wawenock survived and in 1623 Christopher Levett met them in what is now Southport. They were coming from the west (the Kennebec?) loaded with beaver coats and other furs. Samoset told Levett that they were headed to Pemaquid (the name of the whole peninsula) to trade with Captain John Witheridge. He had taken over the fur trade in New Harbor. Levett talked Samoset and his Wawenock into trading with him.

I have researched this and have found that no other English port existed at this time. Jamestown did not qualify as a port until later. I don't know how long New Harbor remained the center of the Midcoast fur trade. It was at least until 1623 when Levett met up with Samoset. It was probably until Abraham Shurt took over in the new Pemaquid settlement in the early 1630s. It's high time that New Harbor receives its proper recognition in history!



Old Bristol Historical Society, P.O. Box 87, Bristol, ME 04539

OBHS needs your financial support to complete the Bristol History Center, continue our restoration of the mill, and improve our grounds. Here are examples of some of our upcoming projects:

Bristol History Center

- Museum-quality exhibit cases, moveable walls, and benches \$11,600
- Reading Room furniture and equipment \$2,600
- Install a wheelchair ramp \$5,000
- Updated heat pump-based heating system -\$25,000
- Conference Room flooring and window blinds \$5,800

The Mill

- Continue structural restoration of the mill \$85,000
- Create mill displays \$9,000
- Build an emergency exit \$10,000
- Build an observation catwalk for public to view mill undercroft \$15,000
- Replace mill windows \$ 2,000

The Grounds

- Restoration of topsoil as well as native plants, trees and shrubs \$11,800
- Debris removal \$3,800

We would be very grateful for your contributions to further these projects.

Thank You!			·
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