

# Clay County Historical Society

Clay County Historical Society Newsletter January/February 2004

Volume XXVII No. 1

## New exhibit!

*A Captive Eye: German POW Art and Artifacts*

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Teacher Elvera Scherling and her young charges outside District #53, Spring Prairie School, 1927. Front row, left to right: Loren Geiszler, Russell Steen, Violet Gilbery, Raymond Geiszler, Bernard Steen. 2<sup>nd</sup> row: Alfred Sauer, Clifford Sauer, Earl Gilbery, Eunice Gilbery, Edwin Geiszler. Back row: Reinhold Geiszler, Edna Geiszler, Elvera Scherling, Marie Gilbery. That October the District #53 Clerk took a census of all the school age children in the district. He made three copies: one he kept for his records, a second went to Elvera and the third he sent to the Clay County Superintendent of Schools. Today CCHS has a copy of the third one – along with all the other school censuses done between 1909 and 1940! See the story on page 5.

## President's Column

By CCHS President, Donna Voxland

HAPPY NEW YEAR!

We say those three words often this time of year, but for this newsletter I want to emphasize the word NEW. Some things don't change a lot as January 1st rolls around—it is just a date on the calendar. For other things, the date is very significant. The first of the new year is very significant for the Clay County Historical Society in several ways:



First, I want to welcome two NEW board members who have been appointed by the board to complete the terms of Sam Leathes and Steve Aakre. Carolyn Barden of Moorhead is joining the board and has already attended and contributed to a couple of our meetings. Pearl Quinild of Barnesville will be joining us starting in January. We welcome these new board members and look forward to working with them and getting to know them better.

Our NEW exhibit will be opening January 11 and what a wonderful way to start off the new year! *A Captive Eye: German POW Art and Artifacts* teaches us about a little talked about aspect of the second World War and reminds us of conditions on the home front at that difficult time. As our country once again has soldiers fighting overseas, it is more important than ever to remember all aspects of earlier wars and the men who were involved. This exhibit brings an historical perspective of that war closer to OUR home in a way we often forget, or may not have known. I hope you will come by and see it at your earliest chance.

The NEW year will also bring some new challenges. We have the very real amount of \$8,857.00 to make up in our budget. That is the difference between what we have budgeted for 2004 (a very conservative budget) and what we were allocated due to the state budget situation. First, I would like to thank our Clay County Commissioners for their continued generous support to CCHS. We all know that they were faced with very difficult decisions and we are so grateful for the support they continue to show us. We prefer to look at the amount of support we receive, rather than the amount of the cut. However, we do know that in order to keep the quality of our services to the county, we will need to make up that difference in fund-raisers, new memberships, and donations. That is the challenge that the board will need to face as this new year begins.

As President of the Board, I am optimistic that the quality of our staff, the dedication of the board, and the support of our members will see us through this year and into the future in great shape.

## Donations and Memorials

### November & December 2003

Roland and Carolyn Barden, Moorhead  
Nancy Shier Crocetti, Elgin, IL  
Wayne Koesling, Stow, OH  
Red River Valley Questers, Fargo  
Helen Rudie, Fargo  
Alvin Swanson, Moorhead  
Donna Voxland, Moorhead

## What Is It? Bring it to the Library!

Mark your calendars and dig out those mysterious auction, flea market and family heirloom items! The Museum What Is It? Team is at it again! In November, the Hawley Library hosted a What Is It? Program. Another program will be held, this time at the Barnesville Public Library, Thursday, March 11, 6:00-8:00 p.m. Pam Burkhardt, Curator of the Clay County Museum and Dean Sather, archeologist and Director of the Heritage Hjemkomst Interpretive Center (HHIC), will attempt to help you identify those What is it? items you might have around the house. Burkhardt and Sather will focus on determining what an item was used for, its date of use or manufacture, and the material of construction. Monetary appraisals will not be given.

Burkhardt has over 15 years of experience classifying artifacts and reading museum objects from her work with the Cass County Historical Society at Bonanzaville and with the Clay County Historical Society. Sather directed the Becker County Historical Society in Detroit Lakes for three years prior to his employment at HHIC. He has an extensive background in archeology, working with objects from both ancient and modern cultures.

Dig out or hunt up one or two easy-to-transport items and bring 'em to the Barnesville Public Library, Thursday night, March 11! For more information, call 299-5520.

\*Programs are subject to change without notice.

# Set of lectures to accompany German POW exhibit, Feb. 2 & 9

*A Captive Eye: German POW Art and Artifacts* is the title of the new exhibit that opened at the Clay County Museum January 11 and will show through May 30. The exhibit replaces *Eating Out in Clay County*, which ran from November 2002 until December 2003. *A Captive Eye* was produced by the Muscatine Art Center in Muscatine, Iowa, with help from the organization TRACES, a private non-profit created to gather, preserve and present stories of people from the Midwest and Germany or Austria who encountered each other during World War II.

From 1943-46 Camp Algona in Iowa and its 35 branch camps in Iowa, Minnesota and both Dakotas housed up to 10,000 German POWs. *A Captive Eye* displays hundreds of photos, letters, journals, paintings, wood carvings, camp-issued clothes and money, books, musical instruments, tools and much more from Camp Algona and its branch camps. The exhibit has shown in galleries in five Iowa cities since October 2002, and will show in two other Minnesota locations in 2004, New Ulm and Grand Rapids.

America probably treated POWs better than any other belligerent, as it strictly followed the 1929 Geneva Convention. However, the interpretation of the accords were subject to revision as the U.S. learned to deal with the prisoners by trial and error. The huge number of men in uniform in World War II created a severe labor shortage in the U.S., particularly in low priority industries such as agriculture. To help out, the federal government offered to supply POWs on

a contract basis to civilian employers. As long as they were not required to work on any project directly related to the war effort or in dangerous jobs, this was completely in line with the Geneva accords.

In 1944 and 1945, Moorhead area truck farmers Henry Peterson and Paul Horn contracted for 150 prisoners to work on their vegetable farms. For more on this story visit [www.info.co.clay.mn.us/history/pow.htm](http://www.info.co.clay.mn.us/history/pow.htm).

In conjunction with the exhibit, CCHS will host two programs about POW camps in Minnesota and the Moorhead area, one Monday, February 2 and the other Monday, February 9, both at 6:30 p.m. Ed Pluth will present the first program about German POW camps all over Minnesota. Pluth is a history professor, recently retired from St. Cloud State University. He has done extensive research about German POW camps in Minnesota and has interviewed residents across the state about their experiences and interactions with the prisoners. There will be a small charge for non-CCHS members.

Terry Shoptaugh, director of the Northwest Minnesota Historical Center and Minnesota State University Archivist, will present the second program, February 9, about German POWs in Moorhead and the WWII home front atmosphere in the area.

For more information on German POW camps in the U.S. check out the book list on page 4 of this newsletter.

## CCHS awarded Xcel Energy Foundation grant, donation from Red River Valley Questers

The Board of Directors and staff of CCHS extends enthusiastic thanks to the Xcel Energy Foundation for a \$1,000 grant for expenses related to the German POW exhibit, and to the Red River Valley Questers Club for a \$100 donation to the Bergquist Cabin Fund.

The Xcel Energy Foundation grant was presented to CCHS at the November regular board meeting by Paul Nesbitt, a foundation representative. The grant will help cover expenses for the exhibit which include: the exhibit rental fee, transportation costs for picking up the exhibit, and advertising and promotional expenses. Other exhibit sponsors include Supporting, Sustaining and Patron members in the historical society, listed on page 7 of the newsletter.

The donation from the Red River Valley Questers

chapter will be used to help replace the roof on the Bergquist Cabin, 1008 7th Street North in Moorhead. Questers is a non-profit organization created in 1944 for individuals interested in history and antiques to gather to share their collections and personal knowledge with others, and to discuss the fascinating topics of antiques and history. Chapters of the group exist in many parts of the world.

The Bergquist Cabin was constructed by Swedish immigrant John Bergquist in 1870, and is Moorhead's oldest existing residence on its original site. The Folk Art Cabin on 4th Street South is older, but not on its original site. Our cabin's cedar shingle roof will need to be replaced soon. Donations are still being accepted for the project (mail to PO Box 501, Moorhead, MN 56561).

## New Board members welcomed

Two historical society members have been appointed to fill the terms of Steve Aakre and Sam Leathes who resigned due to time conflicts. Carolyn Barden of Moorhead will serve until her term is up for election in 2005, and Pearl Quinnild of Barnesville will be eligible for election in 2006.

### Pearl Quinnild

Pearl Quinnild is an active member of the Barnesville area historical society, and has lived in Clay County all but five years of her life. She attended high school in Comstock, MN, and also attended Dakota Business College and MSUM. She and her husband Vern farm, and she enjoys reading and volunteering at her church, and spending time with their seven grandchildren. Quinnild has a particular interest in environmental issues concerning good health. She has always had an interest in history and comes from a family that has a tendency for "collecting." One of the assets she brings to her service on the board is a familiarity with Clay County and a great many of its residents. She looks forward to learning more about the workings of the historical society.

### Carolyn Barden

Carolyn Barden and husband Roland have been residents of Clay County for fourteen years. Barden earned a B.S. in Nursing from the University of North Dakota and has worked as Infirmary Nurse at the University of Wyoming, WIC Program Director, and as Prenatal Coordinator in Migrant Health Service. In addition to her interest in family and local history and historic houses, Barden also enjoys gardening, bicycling, knitting, reading, supporting MSUM sports activities, and rooting for the Twins and the Vikings. Some of the special expertise and interests she brings to the CCHS Board are a familiarity with medical and social services in the county and interest in MSUM's contributions to area history. Barden believes CCHS and its staff are doing a good job collecting and preserving historical artifacts and presenting interesting programs about the history of the area. She hopes to help increase community interest and involvement in CCHS.

## History Tour set for April 29-May 1

This year's CCHS History Tour has been set for Thursday, Friday, and Saturday, April 29 and 30, and May 1. This Lewis & Clark-themed tour will take tour-goers across North Dakota, so an extra day has been added to the usual 2-day schedule. Fascinating sites to be visited include: the Fort Mandan historic site and Lewis & Clark Interpretive Center near Washburn, Knife River Indian Village national historic site, and the new interpretive center at the confluence of the Missouri and Yellowstone Rivers near Williston, which just opened in summer 2003. Call 218-299-5520 to make your reservation early. The deadline for registration is April 2.

## Books on German POWs at the Clay County Museum

**Signs of Life: The Correspondence of German POWs at Camp Algona, Iowa 1943-46**  
Edited by Michael Luick-Thrams, \$20.00

**Camp Papers: The German POW Newspapers at Camp Algona, Iowa 1944-46**  
Edited by Michael Luick-Thrams, \$20.00

**Swords Into Plowshares: Minnesota's POW Camps during World War II**  
Dean B. Simmons, \$20.00

**Love Thine Enemies, 1943-1946: Images of a Little Known Chapter in German-American History**, Thomas F. Naegele, \$20.00

**Enemies Within: Iowa POWs in Nazi Germany**  
Edited by Michael Luick-Thrams, \$20.00

**Out of Hitler's Reach: The Scattergood Hostel for European Refugees, 1939-43**  
Michael Luick-Thrams, \$7.50

## Newsletter a little shorter this issue

The newsletter has been shortened this issue due to time and funding constraints. Please be assured that the staff plans to return to the 16-page format for the rest of the year.

# WHAT'S NEW IN THE ARCHIVES?

## SCHOOL CENSUS RECORDS 1909-1940!

By Mark Peihl, CCHS Archivist

CCHS has recently received some very exciting materials – copies of Clay County school census records. As Clay County was settled in the late 1800s, meeting the educational needs of children was a high priority. Glyndon residents formed the first school district, Number 1, in the early 1870s. District 2, Moorhead, followed soon after. Rollag area residents formed the first rural school, District 3, in the mid 1870s and so on. As settlers moved in, locals created more districts and split others to better serve the growing rural population. In 1908 the number of school districts in Clay County peaked at 114. That's an average of 3.8 school districts per township, about 9.5 square miles per district - a lot of schools. The next year signaled the beginning of a new trend – Districts 42 and 94 joined with the Comstock district and District 86 consolidated with Rustad's school. Improved transportation, a shrinking rural population and the better educational opportunities in larger schools resulted in a declining number of school districts. Today nine districts serve all of Clay County.

State legislation passed in 1909 required the clerk of each school district to make in the month of August, in triplicate, an annual "complete list of all the children of school age then residing in his district." Information recorded varied from year to year but generally included the name of each child, his or her birthday and/or age and the name of the child's parent or guardian and post office address. The clerk kept one copy for his records, the school teacher received a second copy and the third the clerk submitted to the County Superintendent of Schools. Like many interesting records, the later series found its way into the Clay County Auditor's Office.

Some time ago, Auditor's Office staffer Nanci Krenelka, told me about the census records. Persons wishing to correct errors on their birth certificates or folks with out birth records can use school census

listings as a substitute so the Auditor will hang on to the originals. However, in December, Nanci arranged for CCHS to borrow the school census records for copying onto acid-free paper. We're in the process now of copying the series, running from the 1909/1910 school year through 1940/1941. We'll have the copies available for use by researchers soon.

The records are arranged by school year then by school district. They are not absolutely complete – records for some districts are missing for some years – but the collection as a whole is extraordinary. Most years include the censuses for the rural schools and the larger districts in Moorhead, Dilworth, Barnesville and Glyndon. In the early 1920s the forms requested the clerks to include the distance the student lived from the school house. Not every clerk filled out this section but those who did belie the old stories many of our parents told us about walking many miles, through waist deep snow, up hill, both ways, to get to school. In 1923, 12-year-old Inez Lamson of District 108, Borup, had the distinction of being the only student whose recorded distance from school was over 3 miles. The vast majority of kids traveled less than 2 miles to school.

The records also included some surprises. Two folders also contained reports compiled by the County Superintendent of Schools listing the name of each teacher in each school district, each year between 1910 and 1959; each school district and when and whether it dissolved, merged with another district, reorganized or was still active in 1956 and a year by year listing of the number of school districts in the county from 1880 to 1956. We will be typing up the teachers' list and adding it to our website later this year.

These records are pure genealogical gold. Our thanks go out to Nanci Krenelka and Clay County Auditor Lori J. Johnson for making this acquisition possible!

## Outreach Displays

	<u>Open</u>	<u>Close</u>
Hawley Public Library	January	April
Moorhead Public Library	January	April
Barnesville Public Library	January	April
Fargo CVB	closed for the winter	

The Hawley Public Library starts this presidential election year with HAIL TO THE CANDIDATE! This display contains memorabilia and interesting facts about the presidential elections held between 1871 and the 1980s. Artifacts include pin-back buttons, a partisan cookie cutter and sheet music titled *With Garfield We'll Conquer Again*.



The Moorhead Public Library display on toys. Part 1 TOYS! JUST IMAGINE! presents toys that educate and exercise the mind such as a 1936 Gilbert Chemistry outfit, a tea set and a Nancy Ann story book doll, "Missing Link" puzzle and "The Corner Store" by Wolverine which came with food boxes, scale and roll of wrapping paper!



A photo display SCHOOL'S IN SESSION: RURAL CLAY COUNTY SCHOOLS is "Here!" in Barnesville.

This display debuted at the Clay County Fair July 11 and closes at the Barnesville Public Library. In

addition to several artifacts, there is a repeat visit by Dick and Jane. Don't be absent!

The case at the Fargo Convention and Visitors' Bureau along I-94 is closed for the winter. A new display will be set up this spring.

## IN-HOUSE DISPLAYS

On Dec. 30, Senior Connections opened their first exhibit called DON'T JUST SIT THERE . . . GET CONNECTED! in the CCHS hall case. This exhibit was a co-operative effort with CCHS as well as an intern project. Come and see what our Seniors are up to in this beautiful building!

CCHS set up a special display of exquisite, hand-decorated china in the lobby area. These items were painted by Beulah Forness who is still holding china painting classes in the building Tuesday mornings.

## Artifacts & Donors

### November/December 2003

#### Donors include:

Moorhead: Faith Meurrens, E. Robert Olson, Bob Backman

Glyndon: Russ & Lois Bekkerus, Delores Bekkerus  
Hawley: Hawley Senior Center, Hawley Public Library, Carol Ekre

Anonymous

**Artifacts include:** certificate, Bond of Friendship from the Federated Shop Crafts, Fargo, Moorhead and Dilworth, showing UB of E and F #1176 donated \$25.00 to a fund for strikers families [ poss. issued during the strike against the NPRR 1921-1923]; piece of ribbon from the dedication of Bennett Park on June 5, 2002; a small stuffed bear dated 1985 wearing (2) t-shirts "St. Ansgar Hospital, We Care Beary Much;" (5) volumes records & books from Twilight Lodge #142 IOOF of Hawley including minute book, secretary's book, the Official History of Odd Fellowship, Catalog No. 109 for Odd Fellow costumes and equipment, guest book May 3, [1921?] – Oct. 26, 1923 and part of 193[9?]; fly swatters, ball point pens, coasters and grave markers all marked Royal Neighbors of America Fraternal Life Insurance; photo: 8x10 oblique aerial view of the American Crystal Sugar plant, Moorhead, with a letter from OB Rusness to Emil Olson, dated December 18, 1948; (1) vol. register of money orders from the Hawley Post Office Aug. 8, 1882 – September 30, 1890; record books for Clay County Dist. No. 20 school dated 1921-1939, personal journal 1925 – 1927 of expenses of John Turner, farmer & Supt. of Schools in Clay Co.; invitations to the Bob Asp Memorial Park Dedication, newsletter of Hawley Area Viking Heritage dated June 1983; Annual Treasurer's Report of Hawley Area Viking Heritage, Feb. 28, 1984; booklets, Hegland Lutheran Church, Hawley, Minnesota, 1886-1946, Sixtieth Anniversary Commemoration Aug. 4, 1946, 75th Anniversary commemoration, July 23, 1961, 90th Anniversary commemoration, June 27, 1976 and centennial, July 12-13-1986 plus Heglund Lutheran's centennial program; calendar/thermometer advertising Henry Hovelsrud General Trucking, Hawley; deck of playing cards [complete in box] dated 1943 for the Southern Pacific [railroad] Lines with scenic views; envelope of advertising materials for Red River Lager; pair of shoes/boots with a stamp inscription on each "C Dommer, Moorhead, Minn;" coaster from the East Gate Lounge ca 1980; booklet, 1958 Varieties of Farm Crops, U of M Ag Ext. Service USDA Pub. 11—57, Revised Jan. 1958; undated post-card advertising Hamburg Hatchery, Hamburg, Iowa to Rural Route, Box Holder, Local; letter from Medicare dated March 1967 which accompanied a Medicare Health Insurance Card. [Medicare started in 1966]

## New CCHS Memberships & Renewals

CCHS extends a special thank you to the following individuals who renewed their memberships or became new members in November and December:

### **NEW MEMBERS**

Jim & Dorothy Powers, Fargo  
Gary & Yvonne Scheer, Saginaw, MN

### **RENEWALS**

Rod & Audrey Angstman, Moorhead  
Helen M. Anton, West Fargo  
Ann Darby, Moorhead  
Burnice Everson, Hawley  
Michael & Kathy Farrell, Barnesville  
Tom Hall, Moorhead

Bonnie M. Haugen, Moorhead  
Vincent & Shirley Haugen, Detroit Lakes  
Clayton & Doris Jorgenson, Moorhead  
Jeffory Kluck, Lake Park, MN  
Gretchen M. McDonald, Moorhead  
Dan & Faith Meurrens, Moorhead  
Moorhead Midday Central Lions Club  
Phyllis J. Nelson, Moorhead  
Louise Nettleton, Moorhead  
E. Robert & Donna Olson, Moorhead  
Charlotte Onstine, Tucson, AZ  
Bernice Peihl, Arthur, ND  
Jean A. Prentice, Moorhead  
Gary & Nancy Ronsberg, Hawley

Darlene Rustad, West Fargo  
Fern Schellack, Moorhead  
Davis & Hazel Scott, Moorhead  
Sellin Brothers, Inc., Hawley  
Sally Sologuk, Fargo  
Joan Sprague, San Diego, CA  
State Bank of Hawley  
Barry & Renee Steen, Moorhead  
Vikingsland Kiwanis, Moorhead  
Wayne & Loanna Wagstrom, Moorhead  
Ward Muscatell Automotive Group, Mhd  
Thelma Wegner, Moorhead  
Vivian Wensel, Moorhead  
Wright Funeral Home, Moorhead

## Sponsor, Patron, Sustaining and Supporting Memberships

Please help us thank these members for supporting the Clay County Historical Society by patronizing their businesses:

### **SPONSOR (\$500+)**

**We need you!**

### **PATRON (\$200-\$499)**

Mac's, Inc.  
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Chamber of Commerce of Fargo  
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### **SUPPORTING (\$50-\$99)**

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Moorhead Area Retired  
Educators Association  
Moorhead Midday-Central Lions  
Stenerson Lumber  
Thrivent Financial for Lutherans  
Ward Muscatell Automotive  
Wells Fargo Bank MN, N A, Mhd  
Wright Funeral Home

Thank you also to these individuals in the Patron, Sustaining, and Supporting membership levels:

### **Individual Patron (\$200-\$499)**

Richard T. McMurray, Annandale,  
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Ronald & Katherine Mentjes,  
LeCenter, MN

### **Individual Sustaining (\$100-\$199)**

Robert & Selma Anderson  
John Caron  
John & Audrey Elton  
Esther Olson  
Lynne Olson  
Charlotte Onstine  
L. Maynard & Elaine Oss  
Lloyd & Bev Paulson  
Elsie Pitsenbarger  
Bill & Evelette Snyder  
Tom & Sherry Watt

### **Individual Supporting (\$50-\$99)**

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Kenneth & Mary Tangen  
Bruce N. Thorson  
Phyllis Thysell  
Ron & Deanna Ulven  
Mark & Donna Voxland  
Arthur & Marie Wenner

## Calendar

Dec.-Spring	Senior Center exhibit, <i>Don't Just Sit There—Get Connected!</i> , hall display case
Jan.-May	<i>A Captive Eye: German POW Art and Artifacts</i> exhibit
January 19	Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, museum closed
February 2	"German POWs and WWII Homefront in Minnesota", program by Ed Pluth, 6:30 p.m.
February 9	"German POWs and WWII Homefront in Moorhead and region", program by Terry Shoptaugh, 6:30 p.m.
April 20	CCHS Annual Meeting (tentative)
April 29-May 1	CCHS History Tour, <i>Lewis &amp; Clark</i>
May 31	Memorial Day, museum closed
June	New exhibit opens— <i>To Have and To Hold: Weddings in Clay County</i>
June 25 & 26	Bergquist Cabin Open House
June 25-27	Scandinavian Hjemkomst Festival
July 4	Independence Day, museum closed
July 15-18	Clay County Fair

Schedule subject to change

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Donna Voxland, President, Moorhead  
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 Alvin Swanson, Treasurer, Moorhead  
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## STAFF

Lisa Vedaa, Director  
 Pam Burkhardt, Collections Manager  
 Mark Peihl, Archivist  
 Alvera Murch, Bookkeeper  
 Janet Nelson, Volunteer Coordinator  
 Jane Renner, Office Assistant (funded by Experience Works)

## NEWSLETTER PRODUCTION

Lisa Vedaa, Editor  
 Pam Burkhardt, Contributor  
 Mark Peihl, Contributor

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Phone: 218-299-5520/Fax: 218-299-5525  
[www.info.co.clay.mn.us/history](http://www.info.co.clay.mn.us/history)

**Clay County Museum Hours: 10-5 Monday-Saturday, 10-9 Tuesday, 12-5 Sunday**  
**Hjemkomst Center, 202 1st Avenue North, Moorhead, MN ♦ FREE ADMISSION**



## CLAY COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Hjemkomst Center, 202 1st Ave N  
 PO Box 501  
 Moorhead MN 56561

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