

Empire State Express



MARCH 2022

PUBLICATION OF THE NIAGARA FRONTIER CHAPTER NRHS, INC.

Editor: John C. Dahl Email nfcnrhs@gmail.com

The meeting of the Chapter is scheduled for Friday, March 11, 2022 at 7:00 PM at the Town of Wheatfield Community / Senior Center, 2790 Church Road, North Tonawanda NY. Follow Rt 62 north to Ward Rd, turn left onto Ward Road and turn right onto Church Road.

CENTRAL TERMINAL: Construction of a Transportation Landmark



Photo No. **61** Date **5-22-28**
Central Passenger Station Improvement
Buffalo, N. Y.
Alfred Fellheimer and Steward Wagner,
Architects
F. R. Freeman, Chief Engineer
Walsh Construction Co., Builders

Our program for March will be a look at the construction of Buffalo's iconic 1929 Art Deco masterpiece New York Central passenger station in historic photos mostly by the architects. The building of the Terminal was the culmination of years of controversy and when opened it was the largest wholly owned station in the New York Central Line's vast portfolio. It had some 200 trains per day in its schedule and was built to serve a city of Buffalo expected to reach well over a million in population. The station opened to great fanfare in June 1929 just at the peak of the boom times of the Roaring 20's. In October of that year, the infamous 'Black Monday' of the Stock Market crash soon ushered in the Great Depression and rail began a slow but definite decline. Please join us at the meeting, to be presented by your Editor. *Warren Inskip photo; Fellheimer & Wagner Architects, May 22, 1928*

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT



Here we are, crawling along under a restricted signal, looking ahead for a green or at least a medium approach to the next season. Bring on the green leaves and the fifty degree temperatures, it will seem like a heat wave.

With the sudden passing of long time Chapter Member Tom Gascoigne, there came the news of to whom he had willed his slide collection. In addition to what he himself took, Tom also purchased a lot of duplicate slides. His collection was estimated at 6,000 slides. His will stipulated that they be distributed to three entities. All of the NKP subject matter would go to the NKPHTS. The balance is to split by his executor between WNYRHS and Niagara Frontier Chapter NRHS. There are some stipulations as to use but nothing unexpected.

I mention the Gascoigne Collection because it speaks to something that we have been talking about for several months. We were asked by Randy Bugucki if we had a formal digitalization program. We didn't. Not a formal program. We were digitalizing films from the archives, and more recently some valuation maps, but there is no formal "Digitalization Program" in place. Well, you say, we are doing all this already, what the big deal about a formal program? Well, pilgrims, with a "formal Digitalization Program" we will budget money for it, set standards down in writing and set priorities. Someone will be charged with overseeing it. With all this in place we can then go hunting for grant money to fund it. Perhaps there are those who would make donations to that fund to help the cause. This hits two of the three key words in our Mission Statement, Preservation and Interpretation. It's another facet of what we do. Finally, digitizing things like valuation maps protects them from the wear and tear of handling, and allows for some "tweaking" of the image to make it easier to read.

Watch the ESX and the web page for details on the Memorial Day weekend unveiling of the historic marker at Midway Park. We are trying to find out the exact day and time at this point and coordinate with the Maple Springs Historical Society. If you drive down to see the unveiling, plan on making a day of it. The Park has an 1898 Allan Herschel carousel. There are also a lot of other things to do and see in nearby Jamestown and Mayville.

As I write this last bit of news, the WNYRHS train show is still going on. We had three tables again. I will say thanks to all who helped and mention their names next time so that I don't miss anyone. There will be a report on the show at the regular monthly meeting and in the next issue of the ESX.

See you at that meeting, see you at the Banquet!

Jim Ball



Always a sign of spring are those days when one can get out and explore railway relics, like these at Cazenovia, NY on what was a branch line of the Lehigh Valley. In addition to the passenger station, the old freight station is seen behind a genuine LV caboose. One can almost hear the lonely whistle of the way freight coming into town. April 10, 2021, *Photo by: John C. Dahl*

WHAT Does a Freight Train Carry?

Reprinted from The Railroad Trainman, November 1945

The boss and I were standing beside his office window the other day, watching speculatively the N.& W. time freight train rolling by below us.

Turning to him, I said, "I wonder what's inside of those freight cars. Wouldn't it be interesting if the cars had windows so you could peep inside?" (I'm new at this railroad business.)

He smiled, and replied, "That's a novel idea all right. But, you've got the makings of a story here. Lots of folks would like to take a peep inside of a freight train. Why don't you go out on the road and ask somebody to show you the contents and then come back and report?"

So that's why I found myself, next morning, aboard the caboose of N.& W. Time Freight Train first No.84 as it pulled out of Bluefield enroute to Roanoke and points east. With me was Conductor C.E. Akers. Up ahead in the cab of Locomotive No. 2154 were Engineer W.J. Fielding and Fireman J.Q. Scruggs. "Cap'n" I said, "we want to find out and write a story for the Magazine about what you're hauling in each car of this train."

"Well son," he replied, "that's a rather large order but maybe we can accommodate you. As you probably know, this train makes only three stops between here and Roanoke but maybe with the aid of these waybill here and a little imagination we can give you what you want."

And so, as the freight train rolled toward Roanoke, Conductor Akers and the Magazine representative figuratively inspected the contents of the 108 cars. On the first car in the train (a Southern Railway flat car) we found a tractor excavator and parts – weight 44,580 pounds-shipped from a point in Indiana to Roanoke, immediately behind this car were two box cars of the St. Louis Southwestern and Northern Pacific railroads containing synthetic rubber. "It's called 'neoprene'," Conductor Akers explained.

"There's more than 80,000 pounds of it in each car. The shipments originated in Kentucky, and go to Norfolk," he added.

A string of seven boxcars were next in line. They carried about 65 tons of leaf tobacco and were en route to South Richmond, Va., out of Kentucky.

'You're hauling a lot of stuff from Kentucky in this train, Cap'n Akers," I remarked.

"Yes, we pick up quite a bit of it in Bluefield. It moves that way over our Clinch Valley Line from our connection with the L.& N. at Norton.

A Pere Marquette car, originating in Alabama, on its way to Lambert Point, and loaded with plywood, was next in the train.

An unmistakable odor that increased as we made our way to the next car foretold its contents. Only a count was necessary. One hundred and eleven hogs, also from Kentucky, were enroute to Suffolk.

The next car, proclaiming by its initials to belong to the Reading Company contained 40,000 pounds of secondhand steel plates, journeying from Portsmouth, Ohio to Roanoke. The Pennsylvania car which followed, also bound for Roanoke from Canton, Ohio carried 400 steel plates, weighing 50 tons.

WHAT Does - continued

The next five cars provided a pleasant relief from the hot weather. They turned out to be refrigerator cars, the first of which was a Northwestern Refrigerator Line Company car with 490 boxes of Cheddar cheese, shipped from Chicago for Army use at Camp Lee, Va. Fruit growers in California were sending two cars-loads of grapefruit to Virginia – one to Richmond, the other to Roanoke.

An Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe car, which had begun its journey in Missouri, contained 600 cases of eggs, consigned to Norfolk, there to feed Navy men. In the Pacific Fruit Express car, just behind, the same quantity of eggs from Illinois, were on their way to Florida.

From the twinkle in his eyes, it was apparent that Conductor Akers had a high regard for the contents of the next car. “Now this Armour and Company car is loaded with 42,770 pounds of prime oleo stearine, or if you understand it better, beef fat-processed, of course. It’s potent stuff. It’s used in making anything from cooking lard and soap to lubricants and explosives. It’s on its way from Iowa to Norfolk.”

There was no shortage of fresh, processed and packed meats on Train No.84 that day. Five carloads were in the train, but every car was destined to become food for our troops. Three of the cars were consigned to the U.S. Naval Base at Norfolk, and two to the Army at Richmond, Va.

Wrought pipe, weighing 45,960 pounds was in a Pennsylvania car, making its long journey from Pennsylvania to Tampa, Fla.

I was amazed at the number of different railroads, refrigerator lines and tank car companies represented in this one train. Later on, I made a count and found that the cars carried the initials of 56 different companies.

Approximately 237 tons of prepared feed for livestock and poultry were in seven cars. They were being forwarded to Martinsville and Dansville, Va. And points in North Carolina. A Wheeling and Lake Erie Railroad carload of feed from Indiana was on the way to Roanoke, its journey’s end. Northern Pacific and Missouri Pacific cars, originating at Minneapolis, were going to North Carolina towns.

Father back we found a car bound for Durham, N.C. with 600 cases of eggs. These were shipped from Kansas.

“How shortage-weary housewives would really go for this car,” said Conductor Akers. “take a look – 79,000 pounds of wax wrapping paper from Chicago, bound for Winston-Salem, N.C.”

The next two cars carried chemical containers loaded with a total of 153,000 pounds of a vital chemical, processed at Louisville, Ky. And routed to Waynesboro, Va. Out of Maryville, Mo. And bound for Harrisonburg, Va., was a Wabash car with 138 half barrels and 20 kegs of condensed milk for believe it or not, livestock.

A New Orleans, Texas and Mexico Railroad car, originating in Texas, carried 63,912 pounds of grease for Roanoke. Immediately behind it was a refrigerator car with the Fruit Growers Express Company’s trade mark, containing 1,388 cartons of bottled beer, brewed, yes, you guessed it, at Milwaukee and consigned to Roanoke.

A look at a “tanker” of the General American Tank Car Line Company indicated that some Roanoke industry would soon have 76,200 pounds of chlorinated paraffin, shipped from Colorado.

The next car contained 1,670 pieces of lumber from once proud Douglas firs not far from Bellingham, Wash., the shipping point. An Illinois Central car was packed with 700 36-pound boxes of tomatoes, while bulk corn from an Indiana granary was on its way to Roanoke in a Union pacific car.

WHAT Does - continued

And from the looks of Illinois Central car No. 15727, some Weyers Cave, Va., mill soon would be grinding bulk corn into corn meal and feed for poultry and livestock.

The contents of the Pennsylvania car which we next examined indicated that the busy factories of Rocky Mount, Va., soon would be fashioning fine furniture out of 30 tins of lumber coming from Oregon.

As we approached the Illinois Central car just ahead, Conductor Akers said, "I'm glad you threw away that cigarette several cars back. This car is loaded with 1,250 cases of matches. Of course, they're well sealed and packed to meet perfect shipping standards, but it pays to be safe, you know."

"But who wants so many matches?"

"Well, a wholesale firm in Salisbury, N.C. is getting these from Oshkosh, Wis.," he responded.

Bakery good, weighing 25,400 pounds and consigned to Roanoke, were in a Delaware, Lackawanna and Western car which had originated at Norwood, Ohio. Also destined to Roanoke was a Union Tank Line car, out of Louisiana, whose "Danger" and "Explosive" tags clearly admonished careful handling. It contained 53,200 pounds of highly explosive petroleum naphtha.

Pennsylvania car No. 566875 carried 76,075 pounds of gluten meal, rich in protein, from a chemical plant in Chicago to Farmville, Va. There it would be mixed with other ingredients to form valuable livestock and poultry needs.

Norfolk and Western car No. 49284 was loaded with a used 10,100-pound metal-working machine which was on its way from Detroit, Mich., to Henderson, N.C.

More than 40 tons of hard wheat for flour were in the next car-of Rock Island Railroad ownership. Now far from its origin somewhere in Kansas, it was bound for the U.S. Army's large food supply depot at Bellbluff, Va.

The next two cars were "tankers," belonging to the Gulf Oil Corporation, and carrying a total of 16, 174 gallons of fuel oil from Cleveland, Ohio to Richmond, Va.

My pondering over the great variety of merchandise carried in this train was interrupted by Conductor Akers who asked, "Like spuds?"

"You bet!"

"Well, in those next two cars there are 83 tons of 'em and they're a little different from most potatoes we haul. These have been dehydrated out in California, and they are going to the Army depot near Richmond."

On a Southern Pacific flat car, six traction engines and parts, made in Illinois, and headed for Norfolk, Va., were easily identified.

Next in line were two cars containing 1,035 bales of alfalfa hay travelling from Arizona to Richmond, Va. The following three cars were loaded with motor trucks. Then came carloads of fuel oil from New Mexico, corn from Kentucky, firebrick from Missouri and more fuel oil from Ohio.

The next car indicated that our troops at Camp Lee soon would have plenty of lettuce since it carried 23,712 pounds of the leafy vegetable. In fact, this train was well supplying the Army's need for food, I discovered, for

WHAT Does - continued

behind the carload of lettuce were two carloads of dried peas from Iowa moving to the Army's food depot near Richmond. Then came a carload of corn – 100,000 pounds of it – originating in Illinois and going to Portsmouth, Va. As was its traveling companion back of it—a Canadian National Railways' car loaded with another 100,000 pounds of corn. The B&O car behind them contained 1,400 packages of condensed milk for Petersburg.

“I certainly hope they don't get these cars mixed up,” I remarked to Conductor Akers, pointing to the two cars of lubricating oil immediately behind the condensed milk.

“Yes, we'll have to be pretty careful about that,” he replied, “since we have more condensed milk behind the oil, 143 tons of it as a matter of fact. And you will note that milk is marked 'for export'. That means it's going overseas for feeding some of the hungry people of liberated Europe.”

The variety was seemingly endless. For example, the next car was loaded with 600 bundles of asbestos shingles and 600 cartons of building paper from Ohio, and destined for Norfolk. Then there was another carload of milk—this time evaporated milk from Kentucky.

Baled hay, 23,900 pounds of it followed and then came a string of 14 tank cars loaded with more fuel oil. “This is going to the Pacific,” remarked Mr. Akers. “Well,” he went on, “we'll have to have a little salt to mix in with all this food, so here we have 62,420 pounds of the seasoning which comes from Port Huron, Mich., I believe.”

“Ever see a carload of 'life-savers'?” queried Conductor Akers, as we approached the last car. “No,” I promptly replied, thinking what fun thousands of children, as well as a mint-restricted public, could have if they were turned loose in a freight carload of those round packages with the familiar “O” wrappers.

Well, this last car contained just that – life-savers. But they weren't candy, mind you. They're pneumatic rubber life rafts, manufactured in Ohio and consigned to Miami, Fla. Who knows but what one of those rafts will save the life of some Norfolk and Western employee now in the armed forces?

During the remainder of our journey to Roanoke I got better acquainted with Conductor Akers, Brakeman V.J. Scott and P.A. Richardson. “You know,” said Mr. Akers, “you could keep a whole town going with the stuff on this train. You could feed the citizens with grapefruit, ham and eggs, cheese and milk, corn, potatoes, bread, peas, tomatoes and lettuce. You could have them in homes built of lumber complete with plumbing, roofing and chimneys—we even have an excavator to dig the foundation. Yes, and we've got lumber to make the furniture. There's plenty of oil, gasoline and rubber for the autos in the town and feed for the cows which furnish the milk and butter. We're even got some tobacco and matches to light it with.”

“Sakes alive,” Mr. Akers, if just one freight train carries all of that stuff just imagine what our real-life cities and towns would suffer if the railroads ever stopped running.”

“You've got something there, all right,” he replied. “And what's more some folks don't take into consideration how efficiently we move this stuff. In this train, pulled by just one locomotive, there are approximately 3,000 net tons of goods, representing the raw materials or manufactured products of 21 states. When it comes to assembling and moving a lot of things from a lot of different places, and moving them a long distance at economical cost, I reckon the railroad is just about tops.”

“There is no doubt of that, Conductor Akers. I believe we Americans will always use trains on tracks as our major means of mass transportation. Thanks a lot for a most interesting trip. I've enjoyed every minute of it.”

SCENE ON THE LINE



Amtrak's Maple Leaf is eastbound (south by compass) on a frigid January 31, 2022 near the old Tower "F" location and connection across the Niagara River International Railroad bridge from Buffalo (Black Rock) to Fort Erie (Ontario), Canada.

Historically the bridge was also used by the NYC/Michigan Central for its trains, including the Detroit section of the Empire State Express.

*Photo by
Larry Gustina.*

EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK - HOW THE NICKEL PLATE GOT ITS NAME

After last month's program by Fred Furminger, a fellow Chapter member asked me how the "Nickel Plate" got its name. Of all the nicknames railways have been documented with over the years, perhaps no other is as well known, but as little understood.

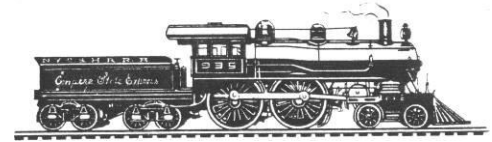
Officially, the company's legal name was the New York, Chicago & St. Louis Railroad. Back in the late 19th Century in February 1881 as the railroad's surveyors were out locating the Tiffin to Cleveland, Ohio section of the new line, a spirited contest developed among three towns seeking to be located on the new main line. Norwalk, Bellevue and New London all sought the railroad. John Rehor's the "Nickel Plate Story" (Kalmbach, 1965) on pages 18 & 19 tells it this way:

"Out of deference to [Ohio] Governor Foster it was decided to run the Buffalo-Chicago line through Fostoria, his hometown, rather than Tiffin. This eliminated New London as a contender. During March 1881, at the height of the Bellevue-Norwalk competition, the Norwalk *Chronicle* [the local newspaper] several times referred to the road as "the great New York and St. Louis double-track nickel-plated railroad." Before a rail had been laid the company adopted the nickname, and from that time to the present the New York, Chicago & St. Louis has been better known as the Nickel Plate Road."

Norwalk lost the bragging rights to getting a new railroad. The line was built via Bellevue. Norwalk had a branch line of the Lake Shore & Michigan Southern (later part of New York Central) and as of a few years ago at least, the historic LS&MS depot still stood in downtown. Bellevue became a major yard and servicing location on the NKP, is home to the Mad River & Nickel Plate RR Museum, and is still an important rail center on today's Norfolk Southern which operates the former NKP mainline to Buffalo. So, the great "nickel plated" railroad lives on. Centralized Traffic Control long ago eliminated its double track status. - JCD

CHAPTER MEMORIES

June 1939, first Annual Dinner
Story collected by Geoff Gerstung



The Railroad Enthusiast – July 1939 issue

The Buffalo Division's first Annual Dinner was held Sunday, June 4th, [1939] at Arcade, NY, headquarters of the division's pet railroad, the Arcade & Attica. It was indeed a great privilege to have [RRE] President Wilkins as a guest of honor that day. Mr. Wilkins travelled all the way from Boston to join in the celebration, and his presence was greatly appreciated. Mr. Rogers Whitaker of the New York Division was also on hand.

At 8:20 AM the group pulled out of Buffalo on Erie train No. 2 in a special coach. Upon arrival at Attica at 9:14, the Arcade & Attica train was found ready and waiting, and General Manager Richard I. Cartwright and Master Mechanic B. I. Cartwright were on hand to welcome the "gang". Both coaches were on the train that day in addition to three freight cars. After taking photographs for several minutes, everyone was finally loaded aboard and the train got underway with old No.8 on the smoky end. Mr. Wilkins and Mr. Whitaker rode the engine cab.

After making a few stops to set off freight cars and pick up others, the train rumbled into Arcade shortly after 11:00 AM. About an hour later the group congregated in the Arcade Hotel where a chicken dinner was served. The Buffalo Division officers are glad to record that nineteen loyal members were found among the group of 51 around the tables to greet President Wilkins.

Among the guests at the diner were General Manager and Mrs. Richard I. Cartwright, Master Mechanic and Mrs. B. I. Cartwright, Engineer Dan Roblee, Fireman Rube Roblee, Conductor Howard Hopkins, and Brakeman Emmet King, all of the Arcade & Attica Railroad.

Immediately after dinner Chairman Shapley got the program under way. Secretary Prophet gave a summary of the Buffalo Division activities during the fourteen months of its existence. The entertainment of the afternoon was supplied by Mr. Charles Bowen, Erie Railroad Agent at Castile, NY, who is called "the Will Rogers of the East." Mr. Bowen recited several humorous poems and dialogues, most of which were of railroad nature. He soon had everyone's sides aching from laughter. Messrs. R.I. and B.I. Cartwright were introduced and each spoke briefly, expressing appreciation for such an organization as the Railroad Enthusiasts to act as friends of the railroads. Mr. John Prophet, Jr. presented to Mrs. Shapley a large basket of flowers from Chairman Shapley and the rest of the "boys" in expression of their appreciation of the many services she had rendered to the Buffalo Division.

The final speaker was President Wilkins, the guest of honor. At the close of his talk, Mr. Wilkins presented the Buffalo Division's charter which Chairman Shapley had requested.

After the program had come to an end, there was some spare time which was spent taking photographs and looking over the A&A enginehouse and shop. At about 5:15 the A&A train was again boarded for the two-mile trip to the Pennsylvania station at Arcade Junction. Here at 6:15, Pennsylvania train No. 571 made a special stop while the group hastily piled into an extra coach on the rear of the train. After a fast run to Buffalo, arriving ten minutes early at 7:05, the first Annual Dinner was at an end. It was universally agreed that this had been by far the most enjoyable day ever spent by any of the members.

Editor's note: Rogers Whitaker mentioned above was a well-known railfan and worked for the prestigious New Yorker magazine. Whitaker's greatest love in life was traveling by train. He accumulated 2.7 million miles of such travel during his lifetime, and wrote extensively about his trips under the pen name "E. M. Frimbo"

MEMORIES - continued

often in collaboration with the staff writer Tony Hiss. He put his knowledge of trains to good use during World War II, where he was commissioned as a Major in the U.S. Army's Traffic Control Division of the Transportation Corps. There he helped to plan the routing of troop trains.

This trip should be well documented in photos since it was specifically noted in the Enthusiast writeup for several "photo op" moments, but as far as is known, no pictures have turned up. The trip would have originated out of the Lehigh Valley RR station on Main & Scott St. since by this time the Erie RR utilized that station for their passenger trains. On August 13th, 1939 the Buffalo RRE Division rode the PRR (out of Central Terminal) to Arcade and boarded a special charter on the A&A with open gondola cars for the fans. Fare about \$2.25. That trip's story will be found in the next installment of Memories.

INFORMATION REQUESTS

Chapter member John Slater is a frequent contributor to Western New York Heritage Magazine, and is currently working on a project for that publication to document the **Delaware, Lackawanna & Western at Buffalo harbor** between the years 1879 & 1917. He is looking for photographs, prior history articles, references, etc. If you can assist, please email him at nkphts4431@aol.com.

ESX editor (John Dahl) is preparing an article for the New York Central System Historical Society regarding Buffalo's Belt Line. I am looking for photographs, especially historic material when NYC operated the line, from the steam era up thru the NYC diesel age and into Penn Central. I'd prefer not to get into use of Conrail / CSX era material. Please email the editor at nfcnrhs@gmail.com if you have photos that might assist in illustrating operations on the **New York Central Buffalo Belt Line**.

ON THE TRACK AHEAD

April's meeting program will be a look at the Strasburg RR by Stephen Trinder. The Strasburg is one of the most well known and is the 'gold standard' of high quality operating railway museums located in the heart of beautiful Amish farm country in south eastern Pennsylvania. Join us for an evening of great railroad history!

LAST CALL FOR BANQUET

The Chapter's annual banquet (a luncheon format) is set for Saturday, March 19, doors open 11:30 AM at the ever popular Ilio DiPaolo's on South Park Avenue in Blasdell, NY. The program will feature historic, 16mm movie film, originally shot by John M. Prophet and now converted to digital format. Chapter member Aaron Heverin who has digitized and preserved many of John's early priceless wire recordings of railroad sounds will narrate these visual treasures from the Chapter's archives. Please see the flyer included with last month's ESX. Don't forget, the banquet also includes lots of goodies and unique gifts in the annual silent-auction fund raiser. **Last Call for reservations!** Reservations can be made on-line with a credit card, on the chapter's secure website.



NY&LE PHOTO CHARTER

A private charter full day railfan oriented photo excursion is being planned for Saturday, June 25, 2022 on the New York & Lake Erie out of Gowanda, NY. For information & tickets please contact:

Alec Durfee

8814 Old Lake Road

Lake City, PA 16423 (814) 392-3862 adproductions2003@gmail.com

Photo: NY&LE Alco FPA4 Southbound at Dayton, NY December 4, 2021

CHAPTER CALENDAR

- MAR 11** **Regular meeting. Program: Central Terminal, Construction of a Transportation Landmark, by ESX editor, John Dahl**
- MAR 19** **Annual banquet, Ilio DiPaolos 11:30 AM. LAST CALL FOR RESERVATIONS IS MARCH 4.**
- APR 8** **Regular meeting. Program: A Look at the Strasburg RR by Stephen Trinder.**

The Niagara Frontier Chapter NRHS, Inc. is a 501 (c) (3) publicly supported organization. Contributions may be deductible for income tax purposes in accordance with the Internal Revenue Service.

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