



The 250th Anniversary of the American Revolution

by John Anderson



Photo by Will Tenney

Militia reenactors recreate the Battle of Concord on Patriot's Day.

Patriot's Day is celebrated every year and signifies the start of the American Revolution in 1775. For the 250th anniversary, most of this newsletter, and many of our upcoming exhibits and programs, will be devoted to Medford perspectives on the events leading up to April 18th and 19th, 1775. I will also use this opportunity to introduce you to the writings of a

woman who was born during the Civil War era, when America had only 34 states, and grew up while the country was recovering from severe self-inflicted wounds. She lived until 1948 to see America united after World War II and regarded as "the leader of the free world." I can't help wondering what she would think about her country today.

Anyone who spends much time in MHSM's archives soon becomes familiar with the name "Helen Tilden Wild." Her 1948 obituary provides some basic information but does not fully explain her impact. She wrote numerous articles for the Society, served in leadership roles, and left a large number of artifacts to the Society. Two of her works are available on Amazon, "Medford in the Revolution" (1903) and "The Old Royall House" (1908). Digitized copies are available online from the Library of Congress and many other

sources. We have hard copies, as well, in our archives.

This issue of the Newsletter will focus on events leading to the Battles of Lexington and Concord. I will be quoting extensively from Helen Wild's book "Medford in the Revolution." She relies heavily on original material taken from official Medford town archives.

Wild begins with an overview:

At the beginning of the Revolution the resolutions passed in the town meetings of Medford, Massachusetts, were not as spirited as those of many other towns of the State; but when the time came for the citizens to choose between king and colony there were only three or four who did not stand for liberty.

Next, Wild reviews how the growing revolutionary storm affected Medford. After passage of the Stamp Act, the town fathers stated their "profound" and "unshakeable" loyalty to the Crown and Parliament, but only if their laws were "agreeable!"

In 1765, Hon. Stephen Hall, the representative [to the General Court], received instructions from the town which included the following confession of faith.

'Beholding with anxiety the success given to these extraordinary measures by the several laws lately enacted by Parliament tending to destroy our Trade and drain us of our Money, especially this most grievous of all Acts, commonly called the Stamp Act. We esteem it our

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Helen Tilden Wild

bounden duty to entertain profound Respect for and pay ready Obedience to all lawful authority according to our happy constitution, and do therefore express our unshaken loyalty to his present Majesty King George III."

Note that the tone of the instructions changes significantly when speaking of Parliament:

"We hold in great veneration the August Body of the British Parliament and are ready to yield Obedience to the laws they shall from time to time enact agreeable to our constitution, but considering them as men and therefore liable to misinformation and error, whenever they require such obedience from us which is incompatible with the enjoyment of our just liberties and properties we cannot but arise and remonstrate against it."

After passage of the Stamp Act, a huge riot followed in Boston which included looting and destroying the homes and offices of the Governor and the Tax Collector.

Mr. Hall was instructed to vote that the losses of Governor Hutchinson on account of the Stamp Act riot, August 26, 1765 be made up to him "upon his Application to the General Assembly in a Parliamentary way." The other persons who sustained damages were entirely ignored. When the news of the repeal of the Stamp Act was received in Medford, the town celebrated by a great bonfire on Pasture Hill. [Pasture Hill is directly behind our current MHSM building!]

Leaders in Medford maintained, at least on the surface, a commitment to peaceful redress:

In reply to the pamphlet sent out by the Committee of Correspondence of Boston in 1772, the committee appointed (Messrs. Willis Hall, Stephen Hall, Tertius, Deacon Isaac Warren, Joshua Simonds and Benjamin Hall) wrote that assistance would not be wanting in the use of "proper measures as shall be thought expedient to be adopted for the preservation of our Liberties, Civil and Religious, being of opinion that a steady, uniform and persevering conduct in a constitutional way is the best means under God for obtaining that end and a Redress of all our grievances."

Others were more forthright in reaction to the proposal that the colonial judges be paid directly by the crown (I suspect that the word "warmth" had a different connotation back in the 18th century):

Rather more warmth is expressed in instructions to Dr. Simon Tufts, in regard to the payment of justices by the crown. He was told to "zealously and vigourously exert" himself to avert so formidable an evil and frustrate the "wicked machinations of our inveterate enemies," for, if a provision which rendered the justices so dependent on the crown should become a fact, "The Ax is now laid at the Root of our Liberty with a fixed intention to hew it down."

When the East India Company ships full of tea arrived in December 1773 an official "committee" was charged with addressing the issue but citizens of Medford got ahead of their leaders.

The people of Medford met in town meeting on December 7, 1773, and heard the letter from

Helen T. Wild
MEDFORD, July 26—Helen Tilden Wild, 88, of 1 Summit road, local historian and retired clerk in the Medford assessors' office, died today.

Born in Medford, she taught school for many years in West Medford. Later she joined her brother-in-law's insurance firm, the James O. Goodwin's Company. Upon his death she was appointed to the city clerk's office and was later transferred to the assessors' office.

She was well known as a Medford historian and was a nationally recognized authority on genealogies. She was one of the principal organizers of the Royall House Association and was a past regent of the Royall House Chapter of the D. A. R. She was a member of the Mystic Congregational Church and a former president of the Medford Historical Society.

Services will be held at 2 p. m. Tuesday at the Beals funeral home with Rev. Charles L. Atkins of Mystic Congregational Church officiating. Burial will be in Oak Grove Cemetery.

the Committee of Correspondence concerning the three tea ships in Boston harbor. A committee was appointed to draw up resolutions and to report at an adjourned meeting, December 16. While they were adopting the report, the exciting town meeting was being held in the Old South meeting house, Boston, and when Medford's letter was forwarded, the tea was [already] floating in the bay.

Among the Sons of Liberty who took part in the Tea Party was John Fulton of Medford. He was one of the party who disguised themselves at the house of his brother-in-law, Nathaniel Bradlee, corner of Tremont and Hollis Streets. The men were assisted by Mrs. Nathaniel Bradlee and Mrs. Fulton in assuming their disguise and in removing the stains of the evening's work.

The men were saved from capture by the authorities by the coolness of the women.

Public pressure and shaming were used to encourage participation in the tea boycott.

The tea troubles were not settled by making a tea pot of Boston harbor. In the latter part of 1774 it began to be whispered that some of the good people of Medford were using the forbidden beverage. A committee was appointed to "enquire if any person or persons Sells or consumes any East India teas in their families and if any such found in this Town that they cause their names to be posted up in some publick place." Then the voters, not wishing to bind their neighbors to what they would not abide by," voted that we will not use any East India Teas in our Families till the Acts be Repealed."

The Empire struck back. In June of 1774 British General Gage suspended the colony's representative body, the General Court, and also closed the Port of Boston. This had a severe impact in the Boston area including the brick business in Medford:

In June, 1774, the Boston Port Bill became a law, and all business in Boston and vicinity was at a stand still. It put an end to the lightering business [supplying ships], which was Medford's chief source of revenue.

Farmers from the east and north brought their products to Medford, which with bricks, leather and rum manufactured in the town, were transported down the Mystic river by boats or "lighters."

On November 14, 1774, suffering but inflexible, the town voted, "This Town does not approve of any bricks being carried to Boston till the committees of the neighboring towns shall consent to it."

Bricks were for export, and the harbor was closed, so the ban on bricks seems mostly public relations. Perhaps what happened in 1775 explains the gesture:

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NEW EXHIBIT!

MIGRATION:

The Ongoing American Revolution

Medford has always been a site of migration. Indigenous people migrated seasonally and the city has been—and is today—home to people from all over the world: England, Africa, eastern Europe, China, Brazil, Ireland, Italy, Haiti, Latin America, the Middle East, South Asia, and more.

Coming with diverse languages, religions, histories, and cultures, all participate in the legacy of the American Revolution, the struggle for freedom and self-determination.

To celebrate the 250th anniversary of the American Revolution (1775-2025), this exhibition charts the history of Medford by featuring interviews with Medford residents telling their stories of migration. It includes an audio component to

allow visitors to hear each tell a little in their own words.

The exhibition is free. It will open on June 29 and run through the fall. Visitors are welcome every Sunday from 1:00-4:00.

This exhibit is made possible in part by a grant from Freedom's Way National Heritage Area.



Writers Wanted for the MHSM Newsletter

Pursue a personal interest and share it with others! As you've read in our Newsletters, we've covered everything from the California Gold Rush and Amelia Earhart to the Silver Mine in the Fells. We welcome new writers. Timeline and topics are open – ranging from geological history, Native Americans, the 1965 High School fire, or the history of liquor licensing in Medford. Length varies, most articles are 500 to 1500 words. We can help you research your topic and we have an editor to help with grammar and punctuation. You can contribute once with a piece about your favorite topic or be a regular writer.

Email jwa02155@yahoo.com if you're interested.

**MHSM Thanks
2 Local Businesses for Their Support**



Pompeo & Sons Insurance has provided significant financial support for many years. They have carried on the tradition of community support of their father Alfred Pompeo, Sr. who served as Mayor, City Councilor, and School Committee member.



Tisha Shaughnessy Sullivan, proprietor of Shamrock Sign and Lettering, is our most recent business supporter. She's a fan of our events and her donation supports honorariums for speakers.

250th Anniversary *continued*

In the spring of 1775, when Boston had received money and provisions, Medford petitioned for a share of the supplies in the following words :

“Previous to the shutting up of the Port of Boston, a great part of the Inhabitants of Medford subsisted by Brick making, and numbers of other poor Inhabitants there were employed in transporting these Bricks to Boston, where was our Market for them both in supplying the Town, and also Vessels in the Harbour, from whence they were exported to foreign Parts in great quantities. But since by the Operation of the Port Acts, this our Trade is at an End, and those poor People are put out of Business and themselves and Families are involved in the same Calamity and distress for want of employ as are the poor of Boston and Charlestown. The Inhabitants of Medford in Town Meeting assembled the 14th Instant [Mar. 14, 1775] upon Consideration of the Premises have directed us to acquaint you with our distressed Circumstances and to petition for your kind Assistance.

We do therefore in behalf of said Town, pray that you would consider our unhappy Condition, and that you would (if the Circumstances of your Poor admit,) in your known Benevolence and Humanity grant us (who are suffering in the common Cause) some small Portion of that Liberality which Providence has put into your hands.” It was voted by the Selectmen of Boston to refer this to the annual meeting of the Town of Boston in May, but great events changed the current of affairs before that time, and Medford never received her “small Portion.”

It had indeed become clear that the “great events” Wild refers to were approaching and open warfare was inevitable. The colonials needed to prepare. (The Powder House Wild refers to below is the one at Powderhouse Square just over the line in Somerville.)

When General Gage began fortifications on Boston Neck, the people thought it high time to prepare to defend themselves. The Committees of Safety began to collect ammunition. Powder manufacturing was encouraged by the Provincial Congress. Stephen Hall, 3d, the representative from Medford, was one of a committee to encourage the manufacture of saltpetre. The local Committee of Safety kept a sharp watch over the powder belonging to the town, which was stored in the “ Powder House” at Quarry Hill just south of Medford line. Rumor said that Gage intended to seize the powder stored there. August 27 [1774], Thomas Patten was sent to remove the town’s supply to a safer place. Three days later Gage sent the troops out from Boston and carried all the ammunition remaining there, the property of several towns which had not heeded the alarm, to Castle William.

The Gage raid sparked a huge reaction. According to Wikipedia:

In response to this action, amid rumors that blood had been shed, alarm spread through the countryside. American Patriots sprang into



Photo by Will Tenney

action, fearing that war was at hand. Thousands of militiamen began streaming toward Boston and Cambridge, and mob action forced Loyalists and some government officials to flee to the protection of the British Army.

At the national level, the first Continental Congress convened in Philadelphia almost at the same time, 9/5/1774.

Next came a tax boycott:

From this time forth Medford was thoroughly imbued with the spirit of resistance. November 14, 1774, it was voted to pay no more province taxes to Hon. Harrison Gray, but to order the collector to hold the same till further notice. January 9, 1775, it was voted to pay this money to Henry Gardner, Esq., Treasurer under the Provincial Congress.

The Committees of Correspondence had been active in New England since the early 1770s. Established ad-hoc locally, they communicated with each other and planned resistance to British rule. As the crisis intensified, they began morphing to a shadow government. In Medford, per Wild's research:

The town records make mention of a Committee of Correspondence for the first time, March 13, 1775, but the Selectmen's Order Book under date of October 2, 1774, records "Paid Moses Billings [tavern keeper] for entertaining the Committee of Correspondence, 40 s.

In 1775, the Committee includes many familiar Medford names: including Hall, Brooks, and Wyman. The Halls were particularly revolutionary in supplying and commanding the Minutemen:

Benjamin Hall was a member of the last General Court held in Boston, May 3, 1774, and was one of the ninety representatives who on October 5, in spite of Gage's orders, met in Salem, and behind locked doors formed the first Provincial Congress, and adjourned to Concord. Mr. Hall was put upon the committee to provide ammunition and stores. In November, seven pieces of cannon were bought and "Mr. Gill and Mr. Benj. Hall were desired to get them out of Boston to some place in the country in such manner as they may think most prudent." These were very likely stored in Medford, for on April 28, 1775, it was ordered that the "Cannon now in Medford be immediately brought to this town [Cambridge] under direction of Captain Foster."

In March, 1775, the ledger of Benjamin Hall shows that he sent to Concord a large consignment of pork, fifty axes and helves, wheelbarrows, and material for constructing barracks. There are also charges for carting, carpenter-work, and the item, "Paid James Tufts for going to Charlestown twice for gunsmith's tools."

Medford's company of Minute Men was commanded by Capt. Isaac Hall, a brother of the

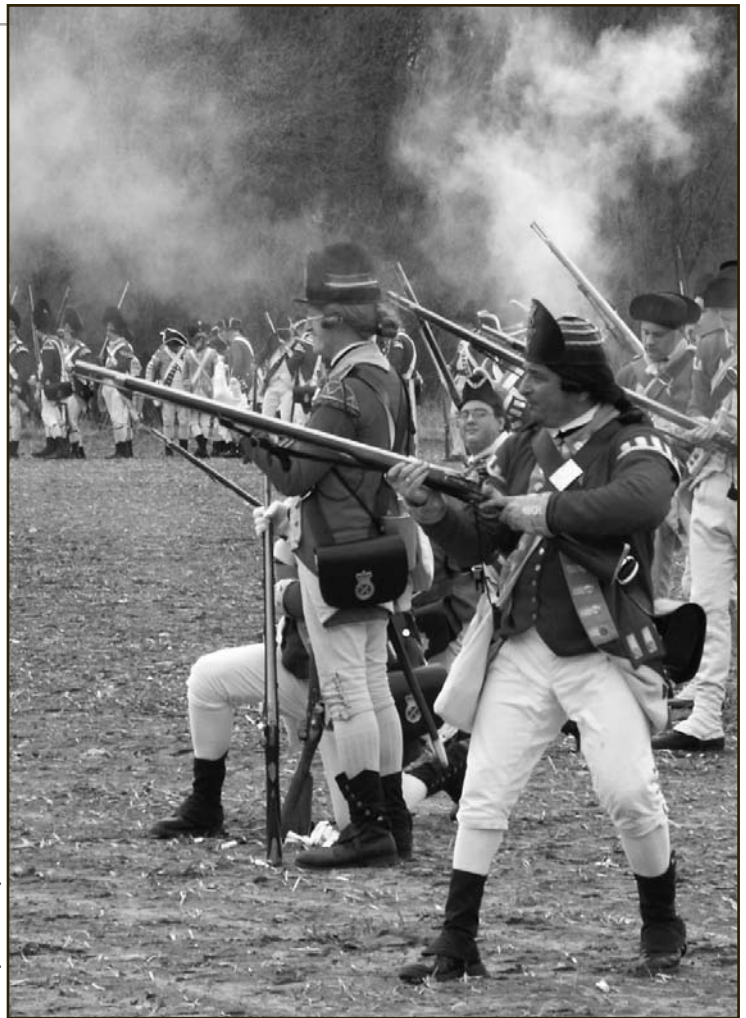


Photo by Will Tenney

representative. The lieutenant was Caleb Brooks, a half-brother of Dr. John Brooks who was afterwards Governor of Massachusetts. The ensign was the oldest son of Stephen Hall, Tertius.

As the April days advanced the people became more and more restless, and rumors were rife. On April fourteenth the Committee of Safety prevailed upon Hancock and Adams to leave Boston, and almost immediately came certain intelligence that the troops were to march into the country.

The stage was now set for open warfare. Wild recounts April 18th and 19th from a Medford perspective.

When Paul Revere "crossed the bridge into Medford town," stopped at the door of Capt. Isaac Hall, and passed on, alarming the sleeping farmers on the road to Menotomy, the people of Medford were not slow in responding. Naturally, some Medford man carried the message to Malden and perhaps farther, but his name is lost. Morning found the town almost destitute of men. Fifty-nine men had marched away in the company, and volunteers followed. Henry Putnam, who had earned the title of lieutenant in the Louisburg campaign, although exempt on account of his age, could not remain at home when

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there was fighting to be done, and grasping his musket, went out to give his life for freedom at Menotomy. He was one of eighty-six Putnams who were on the Lexington Alarm Rolls.

Rev. Edward Brooks went on horseback to Concord, and was in the skirmish at the bridge. Lieut. Edward Thornton Gould, of his Majesty's own Regiment of Foot, was wounded there. His life was saved by Mr. Brooks, who brought him a prisoner to Medford. In his sworn testimony Lieut. Gould said, "I am now treated with the greatest humanity and taken all possible care of by the provincials at Medford." He remained in Medford until February, 1776, when he was transferred to the barracks at Concord.

Mrs. Brooks, who through the day of the battle had served chocolate to the minute-men as they passed her house, which stood in sight of the gleaming bayonets of the red coats as they passed through Menotomy, gave her self-forgetful care to her wounded enemy.

Capt. Hall and his company marched to Lexington and there joined Capt. John Brooks and his Reading company.

Capt. Brooks had left Medford only two years previous to practice medicine in Reading, and

many of the men in the Medford company had been drilled by him in boyhood days, he having early developed a taste for military affairs. The combined companies overtook the British at "Merriam's Corner" and followed them to Charlestown Ferry, continuing their fire until the last of the troops had embarked. One of the Medford company, William Polly, was mortally wounded, but was brought to his home, where he died April 25. All day the town was astir with drum and fife as company after company marched through toward Concord.

As we may recall from our American History courses, the day started with skirmishes as the British proceeded to Concord, but as the Patriots continued gathering, fighting intensified. The Colonials had hidden or destroyed most of the supplies, so the British found very little and, under heavy fire, required reinforcements to secure a tactical retreat back to Charlestown. The Colonials blockaded the Boston Neck (now in the South End) which was the only access by land to Boston. The siege of Boston and the Revolutionary War was underway.

Medford citizens continued fighting at Bunker Hill and were part of the general mobilization. The struggle in the Boston area ended with the evacuation of British troops after the Colonials fortified Dorchester Heights with cannons dragged overland from Fort Ticonderoga. But that's for another Newsletter!

MHSM Is Grateful for the Efforts of Talented Volunteers



Karen Ramon

Originally from Long Island, Karen and her husband, Bill, have called Medford home since 1997. A passionate genealogist, she enjoys researching New England families, including her own colonial ancestors who settled in nearby Woburn in the early 1640s. Karen finds Medford's history fascinating and developed an interest in house histories while researching her own home, built in the 1920s. She is now contributing to the Medford Historical House Marker program, helping to uncover and share the stories of local homes and the people who lived in them.



Lucy Foulston

Lucy is a professional scientist (PhD Microbial Genetics) and has been a leader in the biotechnology industry for over ten years. She moved to West Medford in 2016, where she and her spouse have worked on improving their home and garden. As well as being a passionate nature enthusiast and gardener, Lucy is intrigued by social and local history, and has a passion for genealogy and research. With the help of Will Tenney at MHSM she developed a history of her West Medford home and local area, dating the house to 1880 and discovering the fascinating stories of the families who have lived there.

MHSM Events Calendar

MAY

MHSM Members Save the Date!

MHSM Annual Meeting & Medford Jeopardy Feud

Thursday, May 8, 2025, at 7:00 p.m.,

MHSM, 10 Governors Avenue

We will start with a brief Annual Meeting as required by our by-laws. The current board has volunteered to serve another year and will stand for re-election. Following the Annual Meeting, MHSM is hosting a trivia challenge – the Medford Jeopardy Feud! Showcase your Medford knowledge and win a prize while enjoying friends, fun, food, and festivities!

Note that this is a **meeting for members and their guests only**. Please RSVP to mhsm.officemanager@gmail.com and mention number planning to attend.

JUNE

Did Medford Have an American Revolution?

Speaker: James Bennett, Historian

Thursday, June 5, 2025, at 7:00 p.m.,

Charlotte & William Bloomberg Medford Public Library

In 1818 John Adams wrote “But what do We mean by the American Revolution? Do We mean the American War? The Revolution was effected before the War commenced. The Revolution was in the Minds and Hearts of the People.” Medford’s experience of the American Revolution as a war is a well-documented and proud chapter



Photo by Will Tenney

of the community’s history. But to what extent was there a revolution in the hearts and minds of Medford’s people of the kind that Adams described? In this presentation, James Bennett will examine late 18th century primary sources from Medford to shed light on the fundamental nature of how the people of Medford experienced political change during the tumultuous years of the revolutionary and early national periods. For Medford, was the American Revolution simply a war to remove royal authority from the apex of their political system, or was it a catalyst for a much more fundamental change in the values of their political system as a whole? This presentation will point to some possible answers to that question, and spark conversations in the community about what that historical experience 250 years ago means for us today.

SEPTEMBER

Bill Monbouquette: One of a Kind!

A Red Sox and Medford Legend

Speaker: Herb Crehan, Boston Baseball Historian

Thursday, September 25, 2025, at 7:00 p.m.,

Charlotte & William Bloomberg Medford Public Library

The city of Medford and Medford High School have produced many great athletes over the years, both boys and girls, track stars, hockey players, Olympians, and more. Bill Monbouquette, MHS 1955, and former Red Sox All-Star pitcher, is near to the top of that list. Mombo, who was inducted into the Mustang Hall of Fame, played soccer, hockey, and baseball in high school, and it was in baseball that he rose to the highest of professional achievements.

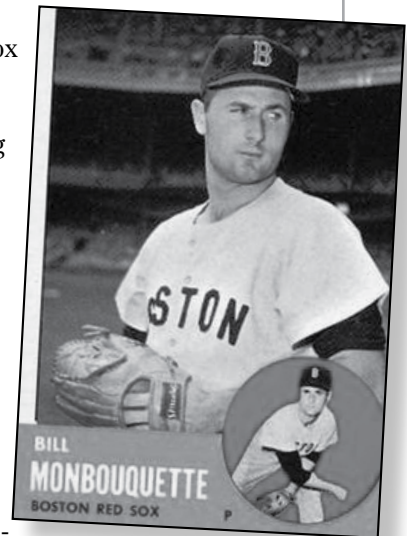
Bill first appeared on the national baseball stage in 1954 at age-17, between his junior and senior years at Medford High. At that time, and for many years before and after, the Hearst Newspapers sponsored a national contest of the best players throughout the US playing at the New York Giants Polo Grounds against the New York City schoolboy all-stars. Bill represented Massachusetts, pitched two scoreless innings, and he was named the tournament’s most valuable player!

His Hearst All-Star game heroics were followed by:

- Signing with the Boston Red Sox right after graduation from Medford High in 1955;
- Working his way through the Red Sox minor league system from 1955 to June 1958;
- Joining the Red Sox in July 1958, earning AL All-Star honors in 1960, 1962 and 1963, tossing a no-hitter in 1962 to go with 92 wins during 7 ½ Red Sox years through 1965;
- Beginning in 1966 pitching for the Tigers, Yankees, and Giants before retiring in 1968;
- Becoming a pitching coach in the minors and majors that lasted from 1969 to 2005! Those are just some of his many impressive statistics and achievements during a 50-year professional baseball career.

But the story we will tell is of Bill the family guy, the loyal friend, the best possible teammate and mentor, a tireless volunteer with the Jimmy Fund, and Mombo the good neighbor who always made sure that people knew he was from Medford, MA.

It’s a story worth telling and listening to!



Program information available at
www.medfordhistorical.org/events/



Militia Reenactors in Medford tuning up before their march.

Photo by Will Tenney

Your Medford Historical Society Newsletter

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10 Governors Avenue
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