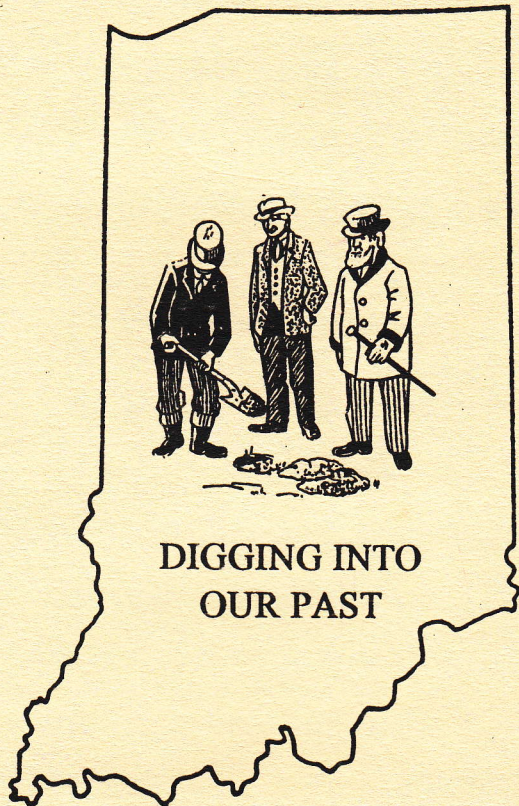


INDIANA CANALS



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INDIANA CANALS

The Journal of the Canal Society of Indiana

Volume 9, Number 2

Spring 1998

THE CANALER IN INDIANA

by Thomas E. Castaldi

Jacob Williams who gave us, "Williams Tells About of Mary Anne, Last of Canal Boats." the story of the canal boat Captain Kendall piloted on his last trip through Logansport, mentions a feud with railroaders. In that Logansport Press article that appeared on May 1, 1932, Williams says the railroad men kicked clods and gravel from an overhead trestle onto the canal boat passing below. The incident ceased when the passengers pointed then began firing their revolvers at the railroaders. In this account, the railroader construction workers are called a "gang" while Captain Kendall's packet boatmen are referred to as a "crew."

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Consider however the lines written by Karl Detzer, a Fort Wayne native and a roving editor for Reader's Digest magazine who authored several books. In 1968 Funk & Wagnalls of New York, published Detzer's reminiscence covering about thirteen years of his boyhood at the turn of the century. In *Myself When Young*, he delights in recalling both unusual details and colorful characters of an earlier Fort Wayne he knew as a boy.

One such personage was David Comparet who lived on Liberty Street near the Wabash & Erie Canal. "Grandpa Comparet," as he is referred to in the book, told Detzer stories of his wife's father, Captain Dana Columbia. Comparet called Columbia, "the best damn 'canaler' of them all." Captain Columbia was an "elegant, hard-knuckled master" in

*"in
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a person associated
with the canal
was called a
'canal-er'
and not a
'canawl-er,. . ."*

charge of the packet Chief Richardville, who hauled passengers and freight through the canal from Fort Wayne to Huntington paralleling the old portage. Detzer remembered Comparet saying that in Indiana a person associated with the canal was called a "canal-er" and not a "canawl-er," as did the people in New York state on the Erie Canal.

Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary does not list canaler nor canawler as a part of English speech; however, some canal lexicons acknowledge the term. In *The Ohio & Erie Canal A Glossary of Terms*, compiled by Terry K. Woods and published by the Kent State University Press in 1995 in fact lists

Canawler. The editor refers the reader to the term Boatman explaining that the term Canawler in all its various spellings was seldom used. Perhaps so, but in our politically correct and sensitive-gender world of today, does the use of Boatman require Boatwoman? It may be a good time to begin recognizing Canaler for those that plied Indiana's canal waters and Canawler for the others especially those of the Erie Canal.

WABASH AND ERIE CANAL RULES AND SPECIFICATIONS

Submitted by Stan Schmitt

With this issue of INDIANA CANALS we begin a new series relating to canal construction. This information comes from a pamphlet printed for prospective canal contractors on the Wabash & Erie Canal. The original is located in the Archives Division of the Indiana Commission on Public Records.

RULES AND SPECIFICATIONS RELATING TO THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE WABASH AND ERIE CANAL, *And estimating of work performed thereon.*

Grubbing and clearing - 1st. In all places where excavation will be required between the banks of the canal, the whole breadth to be occupied by the canal and the banks thereof shall be thoroughly grubbed, and all trees, saplings, bushes, stumps, roots and wood of every description, shall be entirely removed

therefrom, before the excavation or embankment shall be commenced thereon. On a space or strip of twenty feet wide on each side of the space so to be grubbed, all the trees, saplings, and bushes shall be cut down close to the ground so that no part of any stump thereof shall remain more than one foot above the natural surface of the earth; and shall together with all logs, brush, rubbish, and wood of every description above ground, (except low stumps as aforesaid.) be removed entirely from said last mentioned space, or destroyed thereon.

2nd. In all places where no excavation is required, but where the canal is to be formed entirely by embankment, the whole space to be occupied by the canal and its banks, and also a space of twenty feet wide on each side of the space to be occupied, the ground shall be low chopped and cleared as herein specified: and on a space not less than fifteen feet broad under each bank throughout the whole length thereof, the center of which space shall be under the center of the bank, all trees, stumps, and roots shall be thoroughly grubbed out and removed as above specified. All the ground which will be flowed by raising the water to the contemplated height in the canal shall be low chopped and cleared in the manner above described. On a space of fifteen feet wide on each side of the spaces so to be cleared, all the trees, saplings and bushes shall be felled or cut down, together with all trees which in falling will be likely to injure the banks of the canal or impede the navigation thereof. No trees, saplings, brush, logs, stumps, roots or rubbish of any kind shall be felled, laid or deposited on any adjoining job, nor in any adjacent river or stream, nor on any adjoining fields or grounds without the consent of the owner thereof, when the same can be avoided. and such trees as unavoidable fall into any adjacent stream, river or field, or on any adjoining job, shall be removed therefrom by the contractor, if so required.

*to be continued in the next
issue of Indiana Canals*

REASONS FOR PUBLISHING THE
WABASH AND ERIE
RULES AND SPECIFICATIONS

by Carolyn Schmidt

As we begin to print the above rules and specifications for prospective canal contractors on the Wabash and Erie Canal , we will include an explanation as to what they mean and why they were important.

The Wabash and Erie was Indiana's second endeavor into canal building. The first was the canal around the Falls of the Ohio of which three miles were planned. Three ventures of 1805, 1817-19 and 1824-25 on the Indiana side of the falls failed. The first Indiana lottery was attempted to raise capital. In 1826 Congress helped Kentucky fund its Louisville & Portland Canal, which remains in use today.

Indiana learned from this first effort. This knowledge, as well as that gained from the experiences on other canals' construction (New York's Erie Canal and Ohio's early canals), was beneficial when building the Wabash and Erie. (One might say that they had "worked out most of the bugs.") Indiana merely had to adopt their plans and perhaps make a few changes to fit her needs.

Indiana also had the advantage of experienced leadership. Jesse

Lynch Williams was chosen for chief engineer. He had gained a great wealth of knowledge working on Ohio's canals. His abilities were so great that he eventually was made chief engineer of all of Indiana's canals.

The Wabash and Erie was to be built at the time when the few roads that existed were in very poor condition. It would provide the main avenue for shipping and receiving goods and passengers and would open the state to future settlement. Therefore, it had to be built correctly.

Virgin timber covered the land. Huge trees with tremendous root systems had to be cut down, removed, and their roots "grubbed" out. (The Canal Society of Indiana (CSI) Newsletter of Winter 1998 Vol. 9 No. 1 on pages 12-13 contains a diagram of a cross section of the Wabash and Erie at Lagro. There it shows a 64 foot wide area in which this "grubbing" was required.) One can easily understand why the trees needed to be removed for the canal to cross the landscape, but why was this "grubbing" so important?

HOW DO YOU
CONFUSE A
FROG?

*PUT IT IN
A ROUND
BOWL AND
TELL IT TO
TAKE A NAP
IN THE
CORNER.*

HOW DOES A
FROG
CONFUSE
YOU?

*WHEN
HE COMES
OUT AND
SAYS HE
NEEDED
THAT NAP
AND FEELS
MUCH
BETTER!*

A canal must be watertight. If water leaks out it will undermine the canal and wash out its banks. There are two basic reasons why "grubbing" was done to prevent this from happening. 1. Root systems of trees, saplings, and bushes provide a path for

water to follow. When they rot this path becomes wider and eventually undermining occurs. Wood or stumps left behind rot as well and could lead to damaging the canal. 2. Root systems prevent the soil in the canal prism from being firmly compacted to hold water. Soil permeability and compacting will be discussed further in upcoming Indiana Canals.

Mules and oxen were hitched to huge stump pullers and the stumps removed. (Please see CSI Newsletter of June 1997 page 2 for drawings of these devices.) Then the process of "grubbing" began. Shoulders of mainly Irish "diggers" were put to shovels and axes digging out these extensive roots, chopping them off, and digging still further until all were removed.

As seen in the specifications, the "grubbing" was done both where the canal had to be excavated (a trench dug across the landscape) and also where it was merely formed by earthen levees (the towpath and berm) built atop the land. In the latter case not only was the watercourse "grubbed" but also that located to 15 feet under these levees.

The specifications also required that the trees, saplings, and bushes twenty feet beyond the "grubbed" area be cut to no more than one foot above the ground. This was to keep dead or rotted trees, etc. or those struck by lightning or high winds from uprooting and falling into the canal. This was to insure clear navigation for the canal freighters and packets. A recent example of trees being uprooted and destroying the canal banks occurred on June 19, 1992, on the Central Canal behind Butler University in Indianapolis. The breach in the towpath quickly allowed canal water to flow into the White River emptying the canal.

The rules were written so that unscrupulous contractors would not just dump the remains of their cutting and grubbing onto adjacent property of landowners or onto that of another canal contractor who would have to dispose of them. This disposal required extra labor and extra cost for the contractors. For them the easiest means of disposal was to burn the wood and roots. If a culvert, aqueduct, lock, or bridge was to be constructed nearby they would save the larger logs for later use. Huge fires were lighted along the path of the canal. Needless to say much fine timber was wasted. We must remember that this was at a time when timber almost seemed like an "enemy to be conquered" rather than an asset.

The contractor's job was to build the best section of canal for the least amount of time and money if he were to make a profit. Many contractors did this and there were even some who didn't profit at all by the time their section was finished. On occasion a contractor abandoned his section when he saw there was no profit to be made. Then a new contract had to be let and delays occurred.

*to be continued in the next
issue of Indiana Canals*

A lovely Princess sees a frog in the woods. On closer inspection, she sees that he also happens to be wearing a tiny crown. So, being the lovely Princess that she was, she puckered up and bent down to kiss the little frog.

The Frog suddenly leaped back, recoiling in horror!

"Please, NO! For God's sake, I've been a frog for years! I have a wife and hundreds of kids, and THEY'RE ALL FROGS!"

WABASH AND ERIE SURVEYOR'S LETTER HOME

In his forward Drudge writes: This is one of the very first such communications of its kind and offers some insight to the state of affairs in Huntington during the early Canal days. It has been

reproduced exactly as written, complete with spelling errors and no punctuation (*dots indicate unreadable words in the original letter*), which make it an adventure to read! What is so fascinating is the fact that the writer is a surveyor and very adept, we would assume, at trigonometry. At the same time his writing abilities are less than polished, as you will discover when you try to read it. Have fun reading!

CSI member, Dwight Ericsson of Huntington, IN, has submitted the following portion of a newsletter written by your editor, Casey Drudge, in April 1994 for the Huntington County Historical Society. It is a forward to and letter of William Delvin, the first Huntington County surveyor, written to his family in Thornville, OH, thirty miles east of Columbus, in August of 1843.

Huntington. August 15th AD 1834

Dear Father Brother & Sisters I take time our able opportunity to inform you that I am well thanks be to God for his kind mercies to me hoping these few lines may find you all in the same health -- I Received your letter dated 13th July on the 10th of this month which gave me great satisfaction to hear that you ware all well likewise to hear of so much increase of Boys in your families & to hear of another namesakes you informed me that Brooks charged you double postage for the first letter I sent you I do not recollect whether there ware more than one sheet in it or not if there was only one sheet you can

compell him to pay the one halfe of it back again and if there was more than one sheet in it you can get nothing from him, but or that old man that was there last winter is in the habit of overcharging for wanted to charge me 25 cents for a single but I would not nor did not pay it and showed him that he was wanting to overcharge which him now to tkae the advantage but stop his career if he don't take care when you get this letter go to doctor Tribule & tell him there is a letter for him from me in the office for I mene to send one to him with this one see how much they charge him & if they charge you more than him I will see that M A Brook will be hoisted out of that office for I will write immediately to the post master general I sent the last letter by male from this place and so I will this. Dear Thomas I have purchased a quarter of land for you adjoining mine on clear ceek but it is canal land at the same rat of mine 2.50 per Acre & the reason I bought it is this there is good water on it and first rate land and a good sugar camp and the state Road will pass through it I left one 80 Acre lot between your two so that you can purchase it some other time it is only 3 miles from the canal and 3 1/4 from Huntington it is tollerable heavy timber there is as handsome Building place on it as ever I saw Thomas I made use of 59 Dollars of your money for to purchase 80 Acres alongside of the other 80 I had and I was afraid some Boddy would take it from me but I will pay it back to you with interest when you move out besides 23 Dollars that was left which will make 82 Dollars in all that I will have to pay you when you come out the people is taking the land tollerably fast there is an other small piece I have in view if I can I will enter it Tel John Freel that I wish he could come out here to buy land I can get him land along side of yours and mine I intend not to show it to any people not to buy it there has been people Bought land (near) clear creek that has Been all through the Maumee country and they say that it is not half as

good as this John could do first rate business out here (bricks?) is selling at 5 Dollars per thousand and business is every kind as good here. you wrote to me that the price of congress land was reduced but it is not so I am afraid that I can not possibly go on to help you to move out for this reason next Monday I intend taking up school a 2.50 per scholar when you move out I will give you my place all the winter and if I don't take up now somebody will take up the place & by taking it now I will secure the school for you all winter Like wise the court comes on here the first Monday in September and the judges have the appointing of the county syurveyor & on that account I should be there as I Expect to get the appointment for 2 years for it is the Law I would be glad to go to help you all out but I will loose for myselfe and you all my I never have made money so fast in my life as I have this summer I have made near one hundred Dollars surveying besides the building of the school house which is 50 Dollars and I have some more proffitable jobs of surveying to do yet I have not run the State Road yet nor we cant do it to frost coms to kill the nettles for they are up to my shoulders I have bought another out lot in Huntington at 40 Dollars & has payed for it along sid of the one I had the two will make near 5 acres and if you get out in time you may put it in wheat it will fech a first rate crop it has been deadened 3 years and only wants burning of the logs & brush Jameses lot alongside I had burned and nearly all cleared off & sowed in turnip and timothy seed you can for I have so very much to do that I cannot cut any hay but I have hired two hands to cut & put up 10 ton for you all it is in that big prarie that we ware at last spring 5 miles from Huntington but there is not one drop of watter on it they charge me 1.50 per ton in the the little prarie at your place is not worth cuting there is so many canal cattle running on it I will try and have a hour for when you come out Dear Father if you come out with Thomas &

James I will give you a Deed in fee simple for 40 Acres of land off any part of my quarter you choose for what I am indebted to you for you and the girls to live on and the money you have coming will buy you some more along side of it I never had better health in my life than I have this summer there is but little sickness in Huntington this season so far but there is considerable on the canal line like all other canal lines my Horse you wrote was dead I suppose it is for the better for if he had lived probably he mite have done some harm and all things work for the better - I - can soon earn another no ods abut him tell Andrew Beam there is a good chance for him here this Wabash country is gowing to Excell all other countries I ever saw for conveniance and richness Tell Jesse Griffith likewise that there is a fine chance for him to do well here better than he ever can do at somerset give my best Regards to Philip Crist Peter Thumbarter & all who may enquire about me particularly the purty girls, P, D, and others I you will confer a kindness I wish you to write to me as soon as possible and inform me what day you start to move so that I can go and meet you at st maries & helpe you through the bad Roads do not load too heavy it will be better for you to go back in the winter for another load tell June & Margaret that there is as purty boys out here as there is there tell Jane that I am sorry that I did not buy her a dress before I cam away but I though I was gowing back again with some of you buy it for her and I will pay you no more at but remains your most affectionate son & Brother. William Delvin

Clarification:

At the time this letter was sent, it was common practice for the receiver to pay the postage rather than the sender. Even though we often complain about high postage, one sheet sent back then cost either 12 ½ cents or 25 cents depending on who delivered it. Deadened land is land on which trees have been girdled so

that they die and are later removed by burning. There were few if any fences and cattle roamed freely. The st maries referred to would be St. Marys, OH.

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In the "OOPS!" category...

Indiana Canals Errata

In Vol. 8, No. 3, (September 1997) an error in calculation has been discovered. In the 6th line of the first full paragraph beginning " $x 10^{-5}$" the figure .472 mi/hr should read .322 mi/hr (or .472 ft/sec).

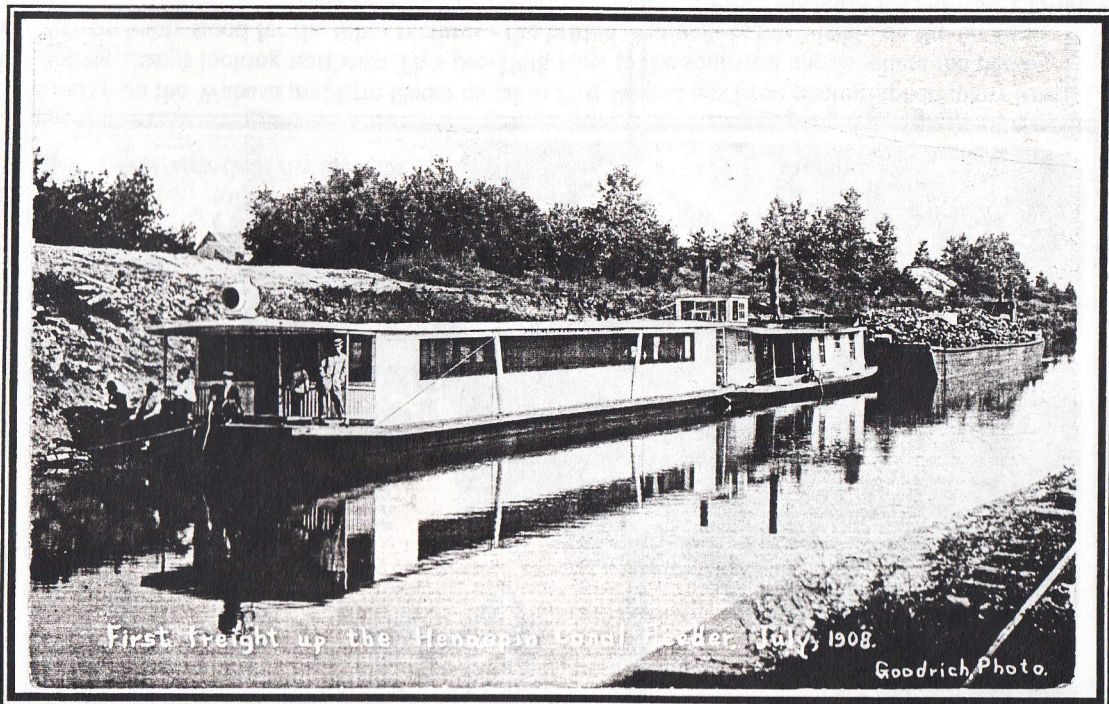
In Vol. 9, No. 1, (Winter 1998) several errors were found in the legal description on page 10. This description is in the paragraph beginning "Deed Record Book." None of the errors were made by the author. Some were in the original deed and others were scribes' errors made in the process of publishing the article. The legal description, in modern terms, should read as follows:

Beginning 210 feet East of the center of Section 14, Township 14 North, Range 9 West, and running thence East 251.5 feet to the center of the Evansville, Terre Haute and Chicago Lock

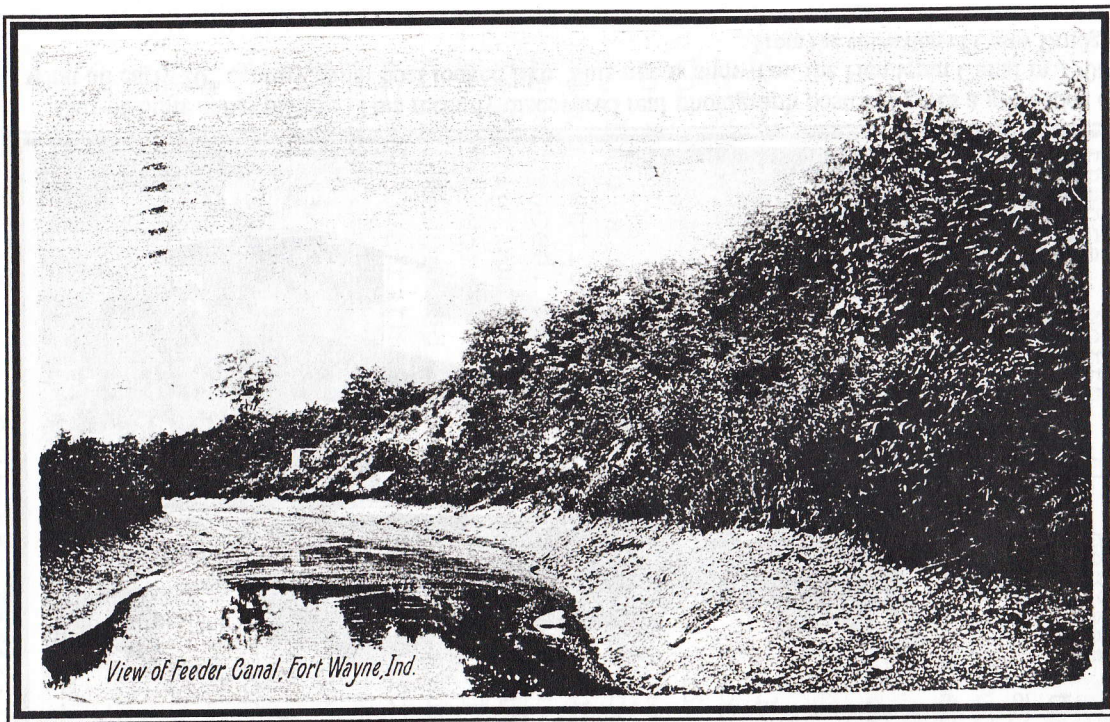
Switch; thence North 17 degrees 07 minutes East, 450 feet; thence North 71 degrees 00 minutes West, 79.5 feet to the Center of the Old Wabash and Erie Canal Towpath; thence South 34 degrees 25 minutes West, 548.5 feet to place of beginning, containing 1.75 acres.

This legal description is relatively important because it defines a point on the towpath of the Wabash and Erie Canal in 1879. Errors in the original deed include a failure to accurately describe which section 14 in Parke County is being referenced. To do this requires a Township number and direction (supplied) and the word Range (supplied). Also, the plot described does not contain 2.24 acres, but rather 1.75 acres. Scriveners' errors converted in several places a "" to feet instead of minutes (a sixtieth of a degree). One further problem was not addressed in the above description. What is meant by the "center of Section 14"? Better practice would be to substitute "Southwest corner of the Northeast Quarter of Section 14" which allows for an imperfect one mile square section.

- Editors, Indiana Canals



Out-of-State canal picture -This recently discovered real photograph postcard gives a good idea of what an early 20th century canal boat looked like. This one is shown on the Hennepin Canal in 1908. From the collection of Casey Drudge.



View of Feeder Canal, Fort Wayne, Ind.

This curve on the Wabash and Erie feeder canal in Fort Wayne has been photographed many times, but almost always looking northeast. This pre-1908 view to the southwest shows where the photographer probably stood for the other pictures - the bridge abutment barely visible on the far bank.

From the collection of Casey Drudge

CANAL SOCIETY OF INDIANA

Organized on May 22, 1982 as a not-for-profit corporation, the Canal Society of Indiana was established to bring together those who share a common interest in Indiana's historic canals. The Society helps focus attention on these early interstate waterways through a variety of programs. Its aim is to provide interpretation of the era, to preserve canal bed and structural remains, and to support restoration of historic canal related sites.

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