

Heritage NEWS

JANUARY 2006

General Meeting

Wednesday,
January 25, 2006
at 7:30 p.m.

Ladies' Literary Club
218 N. Washington Street
Ypsilanti

After the Fire



Ed and Bonnie Penet's 1850s Italianate house located on North Huron Street.

On Wednesday evening, January 25, please join us at the Ladies' Literary Club, 218 North Washington Street, 7:30, for "After the Fire," an informative talk by Ypsilantians Bonnie and Ed Penet and Pam Hamblin about how to recover from a fire in a historic home.

In the middle of the night on November 13, 2000, Bonnie and Ed Penet woke to a devastating fire in their lovely 1850s Italianate house on North Huron Street. In 2002 Pam Hamblin was also awakened in the night by flames shooting up from the front porch of her east-side 1917 craftsman bungalow, where she had lived since 1989.

Hamblin and the Penets had similar experiences. They lost almost everything they owned to water, heat, and smoke damage. Bonnie and Ed first lived in a motel and then in a rented house in Ann Arbor until they could move back into their restored home two and a half years later. Pam lived in a motel for two and a half years, when her house was finally ready to be occupied again.

The Penets' presentation will include slides and they are going to explain the arduous process they went through to get to move-back-in day. Their story is partly about contractors and keeping them on schedule. They are also going to tell us what we can all do immediately to our historic building or home to prepare for or to avoid a fire.

Hamblin is going to talk about the nightmare of dealing with her insurance company. "Insurance companies are no longer your friend," according to Hamblin. She describes documenting everything she had for insurance purposes as "the most frustrating and emotionally and physically exhaust-

continued on page 2

continued from page 1

ing” experience of her life. “Major fires don’t happen often,” says Hamblin, “but they happen unexpectedly and no one is ready.”

Bonnie, Ed, and Pam agree that in many ways they will never recover from the trauma of going through a house fire. “I don’t think I have any adrenaline left in my body,” laughs Ed, and he says that Bonnie still wakes up at 3 a.m. “The physical and emotional problems remain,” says Pam. “It will have always happened—it doesn’t go away.”

Fortunately, both of these stories have a happy ending. The Penets’ home was a major highlight of the Heritage Foundation’s Historic Home Tour in 2003. And Pam has the house she always wanted. With insurance money and “a bunch of my own money, I did everything I ever wanted to do to my house,” she says.

We look forward to seeing you on January 25. As always, refreshments will be served and the public is welcome.



Pam Hamblin's east-side 1917 Craftsman bungalow.



Ypsilanti in Budapest?

The word “Ypsilanti” highlights a high-end store in an up-scale section of Budapest

My carpool mate, Judy Endelman, presented this photo to me after her trip to Eastern Europe last year. While in Pest, a city on one side of the Danube that together with Buda on the other side makes up the Hungarian capital, she was amazed to see the word “Ypsilanti” set in stone over the windows of a department store in an up-scale shopping area. She took the picture, if only to confirm my continuing observation that Ypsilanti had a lot going for it. The Hungarians, it seems, agree.

Contributed by Hank Prebys

Nominations sought for marker awards

The time is coming again for The Heritage Foundation's Marker Awards Banquet. It will take place Wednesday, May 24, 2006 at the Ladies' Literary Club. At the banquet, owners of houses that meet certain criteria are recognized for their efforts and Historic Building Markers are awarded in order to publicly identify buildings of special merit.

You can nominate a home or building for this special award.



How about bringing places that you think deserve an award to the attention of the selection committee?

Here are the criteria used by the committee:

- The building is within the boundaries of the City of Ypsilanti.
- The building predates 1950 and has an identifiable architectural style.
- The building is well and appropriately maintained (maybe it has just been rehabilitated).
- The grounds are maintained.
- If it is a rental property, the property has had appropriate maintenance for at least two years.
- The building has been developed sensitively.

One-of-a-kind markers are possible in order to recognize the preservation and stabilization of a significant or high-profile building that has had a history of mistreatment. These will be selected after a case-by-case review.

If you would like to nominate a building for a Historic Marker designation send (before April 1, 2006) a very brief description of the building and its address to:

Don Randazzo
Chair, YHF Marker Committee
6101 Hitchingham Road
Ypsilanti, MI 48197

A special thank you to First Class Services



The Ypsilanti Heritage foundation wishes to express thanks to Jim Fagan of First Class Services in Ann Arbor. In late 2005, Jim put his professional training and equipment to use to clean the interior of the Starkweather Chapel in Highland Cemetery of debris, dirt, and the "trails" of nature's most enterprising shelter-seekers. This donated service will enable a clear focus on building stabilization and assessment.

YHF Assists in Funding Property Surveys

In 2005 students from the Eastern Michigan Historic Preservation Program completed a survey of a number of the properties in the City of Ypsilanti. The work is required by the legislation that provides Ypsilanti's "Certified Local Government" status. This certification allows for certain extra funding possibilities for the city, a useful resource, especially during the current financial problems. Many but not all of the properties surveyed are in the Historic District. The YHF was pleased to provide the funding, \$1000, to cover the costs for film, film processing, paper, etc. This is one of the ways that the Heritage Foundation helps to further the goals of preserving the built environment by helping to make the history of a property easier to access.



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Ladies' Literary Club,
218 N. Washington Street,
Ypsilanti at 7:30 p.m.
The public is welcome.

2005/2006 SCHEDULE

22
MARCH

Historic Gardens
Ypsilanti Garden Club

24
MAY

**Annual
Awards Banquet**

26th Annual
Michigan Historic Preservation Network
Conference Held at The Castle Museum, Saginaw, MI
Thursday- Saturday, April 20-22, 2006

For More Information: www.mhpn.org
(517) 371-8080 Fax (517) 371-9090 • E-mail: inegood@mhpn.org

***Yes!** I would like to support preservation and
become a member of the Ypsilanti Heritage Foundation.*

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check to:

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301 N. Grove, Ypsilanti, MI 48198

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- ☐ Supporting \$50
- ☐ Sustaining \$100
- ☐ Lifetime \$1,000

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

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e-mail _____

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Paul Schreiber
Penny Schreiber
Andrea Webber

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Heritage NEWS

MARCH 2006

The English Garden



CONSIDERED IN SPRING TIME

General Meeting

Wednesday,
March 22, 2006
at 7:30 p.m.

Ladies' Literary Club
218 N. Washington Street
Ypsilanti

Please join us on Wednesday evening, March 22, 7:30, at the Ladies' Literary Club, 218 North Washington. Four Ypsilanti Anglophiles, Judy Williston, Elaine Found, and Jane and Denis Schmiedeke are going to tell us about their May 2005 trip through the West Country of England.

A variety of garden forms will be presented from the broad landscape of the British countryside down to the intimate environment of the middle class family in urban and rural village settings. The focus will be on garden style rather than floral components other than what specific plants contribute to define style in terms of structure, color, form, pattern, and texture.

Selections will be made from the counties of Cornwall, Devon, Wiltshire, Dorset, and Berkshire and will stress the broader considerations of design in English Gardens, leaving the detail of floral identification for the knowledgeable eye to find.

The British have been the consummate gardeners of the western world ever since the Romans brought the first rose to Britannia in the first century. In their occupation of the misty isles, the governing Romans built elaborate villas in the rolling landscape, left nearly bare from the last ice age, to set an example of domicile embellishment with flora ever since.

photos by Denis Schmiedeke

British countryside gardens:

Mompesson House garden (large photo) Hampton Court Palace Garden (small photo).

My Old Kentucky Home



photo by Wes Newkirk

Last year an article appeared in the February issue of *Early American Life* about Betty and Wes Newkirk and the 1812 Kentucky home they painstakingly restored over fifteen years.

Wes and Betty are the parents of long-time YHF member and home-tour chief guide Nancie Loppnow. The story of the Newkirks and their wonderful house helps explain the commitment to historic preservation that Nancie herself has always displayed.

The story of the house:

Sometime between 1796 and 1810 James Coleman began building his brick late Georgian house on the Oddville Pike just outside of Cynthiana, Kentucky. Coleman was a land speculator, lawyer, and surveyor as well as a farmer. By the mid-1820s Coleman had become ill and started selling his assets. He sold the farmstead he named Poplar Springs to Kentucky Governor Joseph Desha in 1827; Coleman died the following summer. The farmstead became a flourishing plantation operated by Desha's son, Lucius, and thirty-three slaves. Lucius Desha renamed the Kentucky plantation The Oaks. It is no surprise that the Deshas supported the South during the Civil War.

In 1880, Lucius signed the property over to his daughter Frances who had married Hugh Duffy, a judge

and former speaker of the Kentucky House of Representatives. Frances and Hugh had a son and five daughters. The daughters, who never married, managed The Oaks. Over the years, the health of the spinsters declined. Eventually the home's belongings were auctioned to raise money for the sur-

living daughters to afford a nursing home. The land was subdivided and sold and the house sat vacant until Nancie's parents learned it was for sale. What the Newkirks had discovered was a house that had been owned by only two families over a period of 180 years!



photo by Early American Life magazine

Above: The once grand, dilapidated house as it sat vacant.

Below: The 1812 Coleman-Desha House today, a prime example of Georgian architecture.



photo by Wes Newkirk

Betty scrapes old paint on the exterior brick by hand.

Betty and Wes had been searching for twenty-five years for the right old house to buy and restore. They found The Oaks while on a Sunday drive. The Oaks was just what they had been looking for—it was the right vintage and style. Unfortunately, the place was not for sale at that time. When the house finally went on the market, in 1987, it had sat vacant for at least two years. Although the house had not been vandalized, it had suffered demolition by neglect. The foundation, brickwork, roof, plumbing,

electricity, heating, water supply, walls, ceilings, and floors all needed major work.

Cynthiana, Kentucky is east of I-75 between Cincinnati and Lexington, Kentucky, not very far from the Newkirk's home in the southern Ohio town of Hamilton. While restoring the house, Wes and Betty led a double life, traveling back and forth between Hamilton and Cynthiana.

The house became a family project. Daughter Susan and her family came from the Philadelphia area and daughter Nancie and her family traveled from Ypsilanti for extended weekends and vacations. In September 1988 Nancie's parents held an open house for their friends. The family remembers plaster tumbling onto guests. According to Nancie, the restoration wasn't the type that followed a set of plans. A project would be planned and completed before planning started for the next project.

An interior designer friend based much of the decoration on Betty's research. Betty knew what she wanted and what she liked, and she was very knowledgeable about the style of the

house and what type of restoration was required. Wes was with her every step of the way, doing whatever needed to be done. They fulfilled their civic obligations in Hamilton on weekends and focused on the Kentucky restoration during the week. Wes lived in a nearby motel and Betty drove down to Kentucky on some weekdays to work on the house.

Eventually the restoration took its toll on Betty. Her health began to deteriorate until she could no longer make the trip to Cynthiana. She now stayed in Hamilton, with her books and magazines, drawing up plans. The family continually updated her. These updates brought the family together and allowed her to visualize the progress on her beloved house.

Betty died in May 2002 and seven months later the family celebrated its first Christmas in the Coleman-Desha house. "We always celebrate Christmas as a family," says Nancie, "and we all wanted to celebrate this one in the house to honor Mother. We knew it wouldn't be perfect—not the way Mother would have done it—but we could feel her spirit there with us in the house, and it was wonderful."



The home's interior.



photos by Early American Life magazine

The story of the Newkirks and the house:



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MAY

Annual Awards Banquet

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6101 Hitchingham Road
Ypsilanti, MI 48197
e-mail: drandazzo@provide.net



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The Ypsilanti Heritage Foundation
Heritage News
c/o Don Randazzo
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Heritage NEWS

MAY 2006

2006



The Ypsilanti
Heritage Foundation
cordially invites you to

The Annual Awards Banquet

on Wednesday,
May 24, 2006
6:30 p.m.

at the
Ladies' Literary Club
218 N. Washington Street
Ypsilanti

Please join us
for dinner and
celebration
and bring a dish to pass

for information contact
Karen Nickels at 483-8896
or Penny Schreiber at 483-5688



Historic Markers

presented at the

May Banquet

The Ypsilanti Heritage Foundation would like to congratulate the 2006 Historic Marker recipients. The criteria used for awarding the marker includes the structure's architectural significance and the care and maintenance of the property.

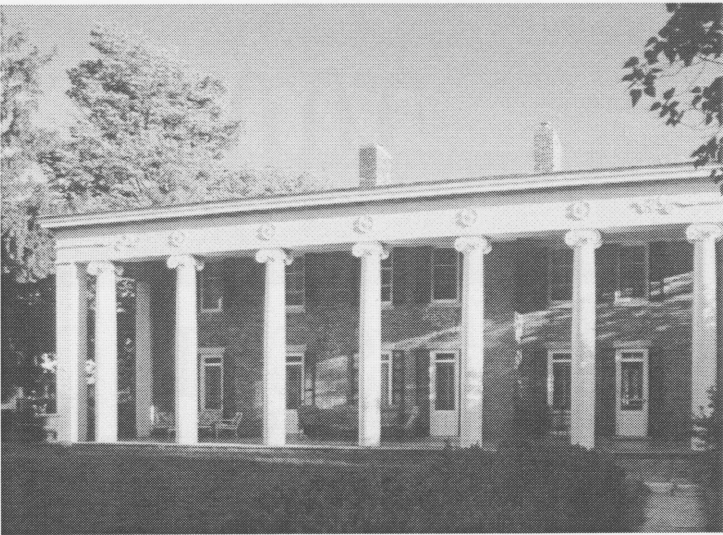
This year the following property owners will be recognized at the Annual Awards Banquet:

James & Elizabeth Fink
208 South Washington Street

Christian and Maura Overland
119 South Washington Street

Kerista Girty
110 North Street

Kathleen Dvorak
904 Pleasant Drive



206 South Washington Street

The home of
James and Elizabeth Fink

Originally built in 1837, the building was known as the Washington Street Primary School; it was Ypsilanti's first public school. The building was also sometimes known as the Southside School or the Red Brick School. In the 1860s, the schoolhouse was transformed into a private residence. The house took on its current appearance in 1937. Then owner Dr. Bradley Harris returned from a trip to Williamsburg that year. Enamored of the restored colonial Virginia town's atmosphere, he had his architect son-in-law, who was associated with the Williamsburg restoration, redesign the home. The massive Roman Ionic columns date from that time.

1837 & 1939

Originally Federal Style – converted to
Classical Revival in 1939



119 Washington Street

The home of
Christian and Maura Overland

Built in 1865, possibly in the Italianate Style, this house was enlarged and redesigned as a Queen Anne in 1875 when ornamental gables were added. Other additions, including an attached garage, were added at various times in the following years. In order to again update the appearance of the exterior, in the 1930s a garden wall was incorporated adjacent to the main façade (perhaps at the same time the original porches were removed). The Overlands have done extensive work to suggest the early- twentieth-century appearance of the home.

1865 & 1875

Originally Italianate Style – converted to
Queen Anne in 1875

Ypsilanti Heritage Foundation Congratu



110 North Street

The home of
Kerista Girty

This basic, vernacular late-nineteenth-century house first appears in the city records in 1890, although it could have been built in the 1880s. Even though it isn't likely that an architect designed it, the house was clearly constructed by builders with an awareness of what was then currently fashionable. The evidence for this is in the details on the front gable. The builders wanted to make an up-to-date statement, even if that statement was to be on a small scale. Today's bright color scheme and modern version of a steel roof also make a statement, ensuring the home's survival into the twenty-first century and beyond (we hope).

1890
Queen Anne



904 Pleasant Drive

The home of
Kathleen Dvorak

This charming brick home was built in 1931 in the Norman country style. The 1920s and 1930s saw revivals of historic home styles. In earlier periods, architecture often attempted replications of European prototypes. In the early 1920s there was an interest in Cotswold and French Norman styles for large mansions. Soon the architecture of small houses began to use elements of these historic styles as a suggestion of the romantic past. As the Depression came on, America was very much in need of romance; houses similar to this one were popular with the folks who could afford them. The house's landscaping has been recognized by the Ypsilanti Garden Cub as exceptional.

1931
Period Country Norman

lates the 2006 Marker Award Recipients

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Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____

email _____



Heritage Foundation's Annual **HISTORIC HOMES TOUR**

Sunday, August 20th

We are looking for volunteers
to serve as guides for the home tour.

The shifts: 2 1/2 hours

The benefits: free admission to the home tour and
an invitation to the Post-Tour Party

call Jan Arps 734 426-5057
or Penny Schreiber 483-5688

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Heritage NEWS

AUG./SEPT. 2006

GOOD NEWS EDITION



600 North River Street



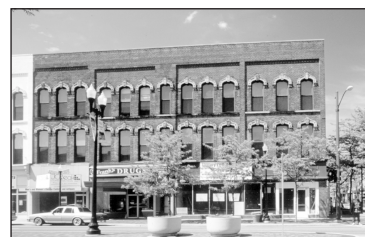
301 North Grove Street



904 Pleasant Drive



53 South Summit Street



200 West Michigan Avenue



1216 Grant Street

Historic Home Tour 2006

Sunday, August 20 ■ noon - 5pm

The 29th Annual Historic Home Tour will take place on Sunday, August 20th from noon - 5pm. Advance tickets are on sale in Ypsilanti at Haab's Restaurant, Norton-Durant Florists & Gifts, and Quinn's Essentials, they are also available in Ann Arbor at Downtown Home & Garden and in Canton at Feather Your Nest. Tickets are \$10.00 in advance and \$12.00 the day of the tour. On the day of the tour, tickets are available at the Home Tour ticket booth in front of the Historical Museum at 208 North Huron Street from 10 a.m. until 3 pm and Haab's on Michigan Avenue.



Good News

in Ypsilanti

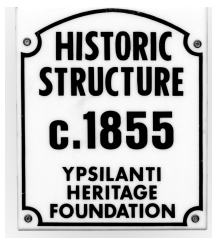
"It Happened in Ypsilanti"

The Ypsilanti Heritage Foundation presents its 2006 Good News Issue reporting, for our own delight and that of our Festival visitors, on some of the improvements that have occurred in the Ypsilanti Historic District over the past year.

It's also our chance to say Thank You to everyone who cares for and about Ypsilanti!

**Heritage Foundation
Historic Structure Markers**
were awarded this year to the houses at:

110 North Street
904 Pleasant Drive
119 S. Washington Street
206 S. Washington Street



Congratulations to the homeowners!

Major Investments

Corner Brewery

is open on Forest at Norris and the parking lot is full – stop in, meet owners Matt & Rene Greff, and enjoy!



The Kresge Building

on Michigan at Washington, vacant for decades, in 2004 was in the beginning stages of rehab. In 2005, a number of the new loft apartments in that building were on Home Tour. This year, the West Michigan Avenue Lofts won a Washtenaw Contractors Association annual PYRAMID Award for exceptional effort in the areas of teamwork, service or innovation. The Lofts, a comprehensive renovation of five adjoining storefronts that had been vacant for decades, got the award for Best Project Team under \$3 million. A Mongolian restaurant will

soon open on the first floor and a comedy club in the lower level!

Several new businesses have opened downtown & in Depot Town – we welcome them!

Major Rehab Jobs

Riverside Arts Center

has leased the vacant, next door Detroit Edison building. The two buildings will be connected by an elevator and a stair tower connector to provide full accessibility for all floors. The Edison building, constructed in 1915, is being renovated to provide restrooms, dressing rooms and air conditioning. Space will be available for a fine arts classroom, dance studios, rehearsal space, and perhaps a retail space for local artists.



Paint

A bit of explanation about paint colors: In the Historic District paint colors must be approved by the Historic District Commission. But, unlike HDCs in other communities, the Ypsilanti HDC does not insist on historically accurate colors because it believes that property owners who are lavishing effort and money on their buildings should have some fun with their paint colors. So, some paint jobs are historically accurate, some are not. Some of the properties below may be in the District, some may not. All are worth a look!

Oh, we love fresh paint jobs, especially fresh new colors!

114 W. Michigan (no longer purple!)
304 E. Forest (no longer baby blue!)
148 N. Washington, (no longer Pepto Bismol pink!)
47 N. Huron, the Corner Health Center
230 N. Grove
113 S. Washington
312 Washtenaw

In Depot Town, the Enchanted Florist, the Hair Station and Apotheke all have fresh paint colors and new awnings.

Public Spaces

At the once trash-strewn vacant corner of Michigan and Ballard, the handsome new **Police and Fire Memorial Park** honors those local heroes who protect us at the risk of their own lives.

Library Park

between the Library and Bombadill's, has been transformed – the Patsy Chandler fountain has been clad in mosaic tiles and a beautiful new statue of Harriet Tubman presides over new benches, fences and landscaping. Altogether, a lovely job.

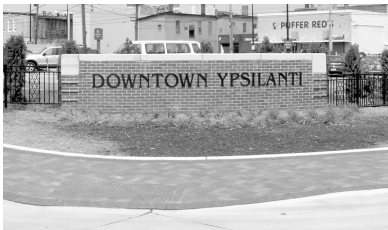


Big Improvements

Handsome and appropriate **iron fences** have replaced chain link and deteriorated wood at 301-307-309 N Washington and along the railroad tracks between Cross Street and the Freighthouse.

Parking Lots

take a look at the iron fencing, brick paving, trees and landscaping that now grace the City lots on both North and South Huron. As part of that project, a handsome brick wall at South Huron and Ferris announces "Downtown Ypsilanti".



Great News!

Lewis House

the beautiful Italianate at 415 North Huron sold recently and is in good hands for many years to come! Preservationists can breathe easy!

Citizens Bank building

at 133 W Michigan is engulfed in scaffolding – the long-awaited restoration is underway!

Innovation

is at work at the FOOD CO-OP on North River where solar panels have been installed and are now supplying a portion of the Co-op's energy.

Good Work

Great examples of appropriate porch reconstructions, very well done, can be seen at 413 Maple and 116 S.Adams. And the lovely porch rail on the Queen Anne house at 302 N. Hamilton has been rescued.

Ypsilanti Auto Heritage Museum

on East Cross at River, the construction of a pitched roof and the installation of remaining siding and new doors is complete – looking good!

Rescue Efforts

Many thanks to all the good people who have saved a historic building from years of neglect and abuse.

316 Pearl – aluminum siding removed, original clapboard painted and an appropriate fence installed.

32 S Normal and 30 S Normal – beautiful rehab jobs well done.

629 N River – once an ugly duckling, now a pretty little swan.

Museums Don't miss these treasures!

Antique Fire Equipment Museum

on Cross Street between Huron and Washington

Ypsilanti Automotive Heritage Museum

on Cross at North River

Historical Museum

on North Huron just south of Cross

Yankee Air Force Museum

at Willow Run Airport

Thanks to everyone who makes Ypsilanti a better place to live, police, fire fighters, city manager, city department heads, city employees, mayor and city council, boards and commissions! They're a great bunch doing a great job in hard times.

Thanks also to the Department of Public Works for great service year-round, for SUPER snow removal and for never missing their scheduled rounds, even during the chaos left by storms.

Special Thanks...

to all those folks who quietly and faithfully maintain their properties, who sweep and water, pick up and plant, repair and paint. If we missed mentioning you, know that without your effort Ypsilanti wouldn't be the great place it is!

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27
SEPTEMBER

Barns & Out Buildings

15
NOVEMBER

Ypsilanti Water Tower Larry Thomas

31
JANUARY

Ask the Experts answers to questions about restoration of your home, its decoration and furnishings

28
MARCH

Spring Gardens

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