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## Hook 'em While They're Young: Getting Children Interested in Family & History

On September 28th, Catherine "Casey" Zahn will present "Hook 'em While They're Young" - ideas & techniques for getting children interested in their family heritage. A third grade teacher, Ms. Zahn is a firm believer that children can become interested in any type of history with the right strategies. From hands-on activities to websites, this presentation will show adults how to engage kids with history.

Zahn's own interest in connecting children with history began, appropriately, with her father.

His family was from the

Southeastern Connecticut area with deep roots in Mystic - half of his family is buried in Elm Grove Cemetery.

When her father became ill, Zahn traveled from New Jersey with her daughter, then age five, to visit

him: "I realized that if I didn't research my family history, my daughter wouldn't know about her Connecticut roots. Often our trips would include old back roads and visits to cousins and cemeteries. (My dad used to warn me to be careful about some of them since they were on ledges!) So when it came time for my daughter to draw something in school that she liked to do with her mother, she drew a lovely picture of a cemetery!! It was then that I knew I could get children involved & excited about their family history.

Casey Zahn is a Norwich, CT native residing and teaching in Robbinsville, NJ. She is a past trustee of the Genealogical Society of NJ and 2008 program chair for the FGS Conference in Philadelphia. Casey has written teacher guides for the National Genealogical Society and has had teaching articles published in *Heritage Quest Magazine*. She was recently elected to serve on the National Alumni Council for Davis & Elkins College in WV and was a 1997 district recipient of the NJ Governor's Teacher of the Year. She is an America History Fellow for the Nathanael Greene Liberty Foundation. Currently, Casey resides in Pennington, NJ with her husband and daughter and often goes home to New England to seek out her relatives past and present.



## MRHS Program Line-Up Announced for 2011-12 ~ Aimée Allaire

The Program Committee is pleased to announce an exciting new roster of speakers for the 2011-12 meeting season.

All of the Society's Membership Meetings and programs are held at 7:30pm in the parish hall at the Mystic Congregational Church, 43 East Main St., Mystic. Meetings are on the **fourth Wednesday** of the month from September through May, excluding December. This year's November meeting will be on the last Wednesday due to the Thanksgiving holiday. All programs and refreshments afterward are free. We look forward to seeing returning and new members at the upcoming Membership Meetings.

9/28/11 Casey Zahn - Hook 'Em While They're Young

10/26/11 Judy Hicks - Four Women of Mystic

11/30/11 Laura Beach - Sailor's Valentines to Susan's Teeth: Collecting Maritime Art & Antiques Then and Now

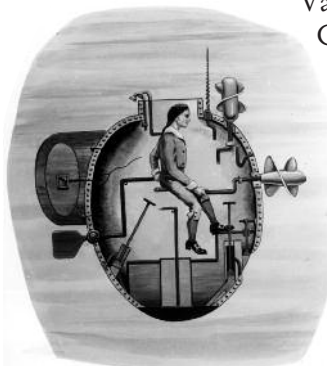
1/25/12 Nautilus Submarine

2/22/12 Rob Palmer - Henry R. Palmer's My First Three Hundred Years

3/28/12 Maggie Jones - The Peace Sanctuary and Coogan Farm...Then & Now. (Annual Potluck)

4/25/12 to be determined

5/23/12 Jim Streeter - Groton's Morton Plant (Annual Business Meeting)



*A precursor to the Nautilus, is David Bushnell's 1776 "Turtle" from a well-meaning, but flawed 1875 rendering. Errors include internal ballast tanks and helical screw propellers.*  
www.navalsource.org

## MRHS Fall Trip Cancelled

Due to light participation, the MRHS fall excursion has been cancelled this year. The trip may be revived in the future, but those who have already made deposits will be fully refunded. Thank you for understanding.



## from the CONTRIBUTOR'S DESK

*Jim Kimenker*

Some of you may have noticed that the title of this column has changed. Attentive followers of our organization will nod knowingly—Lou Allyn has replaced me as President of the Mystic River Historical Society, but as I remain on the Board, he asked that I continue writing the column. I surprised myself by agreeing (as far as I can tell, that surprise was not caused by any dementia) and thus the new title. Happy to consider another, snappier one.

Surprise turned to frustration as I struggled to find a suitable topic for this month's column, until I read an article in the New York Times last month, entitled "Next Frontier for Restless Americans". The article contemplated the almost unimaginable notion that economic changes might actually cause significant numbers of Americans to consider emigrating to other countries. Unimaginable, because from its very beginning, this continent has been the goal of emigrants, never a significant source. But given the quickening pace of globalization (putting aside the current economic contretemps or maybe because of them), it's not something that can be just shrugged off as an impossibility.

I was struck particularly by a quote from Isabel Wilkerson, author of "The Warmth of Other Suns", which chronicles worldwide emigration over the centuries: "emigrating out of one's country is often a last-chance act of near desperation for poor and working people and takes a great deal of forethought and a near-total break from all that one has known." In other words, when life becomes untenable, whether due to politics, economics or discrimination, people take that perceived, last chance, and leave.

Wilkerson's words were timely for me, personally, due to the passing of both my parents in the last year. In digging through boxes, we came across long-forgotten documents regarding the immigration and naturalization of two of my grandparents almost exactly 100 years ago. In addition to helping us confirm dates and places, it also caused us to remember the various stories we'd all heard about how it all happened. And it was all of a piece with Wilkerson's words—a last-chance act of near desperation which did ultimately result in a near-total break from everything they had known. Can any of us truly understand the enormity of such an undertaking? A visit

to Ellis Island a few years ago proved a very intimate and emotional time for me personally, thinking of those ancestors who actually trod the same grounds. And, although I knew one of those ancestors (my grandmother), I was too young and callow ever to sit down with her and ask the right questions to learn about what it was actually like—a lasting regret.

And that regret provides a couple of lessons, at least. I've written before about trying to look beyond the dry recitation of past facts by being mindful that we're reading about real people. But just "being mindful" is not sufficient if we're after a true understanding of the past. To truly understand, we must find a way to push past the words on the page to recognize and appreciate what the world actually looked and felt like to those past participants. Take emigration—have any of us tried to feel, in a visceral way, that "last-chance" desperation of emigrants (ancestral or not) as they looked loved ones and friends in the eyes, then turned and left, frequently never to return? Can we truly understand history unless we make the attempt?

The more mundane lesson, of course, is not to ignore the history in our own backyards. If your backyard is anything like mine, you might be surprised what you find!



*Caption reads "New York - Welcome to the Land of Freedom - an Ocean Steamer Passing the Statue of Liberty - Scene on the Steerage Deck", Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper, June 2, 1887, Library of Congress archives.*

### *Mystic River Historical Society Mission Statement*

*The Society exists to collect, arrange, exhibit and preserve records, papers, photographs, artifacts, relics and related archival materials that document the history of the people who lived in the area around the Mystic River from the first settlement in 1654 to the present.*

*Officers: President - Lou Allyn • Vice President - John Porter  
Treasurer - Bill Everett • Corresponding Secretary - Lois Glazer • Recording Secretary - Cathy Marco*

*The Newsletter of the Mystic River Historical Society is published six times annually: September, October, November-December, January-February, March-April and May • Box 245 Mystic, CT 06355  
Issues of the newsletter are available for online viewing at [www.mystichistory.org](http://www.mystichistory.org)*



# A Lady of Grace and Elegance

- Bettye Noyes

It was a privilege to know Joyce Everett. We were saddened by her death on July 11, 2011. Our sympathy and caring thoughts reach out to Bill, her three sons and their families. Our community and a myriad of her friends and colleagues are touched by the loss of this incredible, vibrant lady.

Her distinguished educational background enriched the direction of her life. Although trained as a teacher, she became a very successful Travel Agent in the area. Joyce had a bit of the wanderlust in her soul. It was her joy to plan trips for clients.

Her love of history combined with deep commitment and dedication to Mystic River Historical Society since its founding was evident. Not only did she serve as President for 9 years, but on the Board and many committees throughout the last 35 years.

We remember her quiet manner yet always a twinkle in her eye. A worthy community cause was being promoted or an exciting event was planned and volunteers were needed. Gracious persuasion was one of her endearing gifts. Who could ever say no to Joyce? Using her rich professional background as a Travel Agent, she organized the very popular Mystic River Historical Society Tours. Like a real 'Pied Piper', Joyce led us on many fascinating adventures to historic sites and cultural delights.

Respected and admired by the local business community, she was an active member of the Southeastern Connecticut Women's Network for Professional Women.

As members of St. Mark's Episcopal Church, both Joyce and Bill gave freely of themselves to care for and help others who needed a 'lift'.

Joyce Everett's legacy is herself. Her life has been an example of service, vital community involvement, achievement, and caring for others. Best of all, we remember her irresistible charm of friendly graciousness and quiet elegance, a zest for life and enjoying a cup of tea with friends.



## Thompson's "In the Woods" Restored

- Dorrie Hanna

This lovely painting by George A. Thompson was given to MRHS in 2002 by the late William Burrows Allen, in memory of the Benjamin Burrows family. Mr. Allen told us the title of the painting was "Porters Rocks", but we can't determine if that is the actual title. It was recently restored by the Cooley Galleries in Old Saybrook, CT and is now back on display in the Downes Building. Funding for the restoration was provided by our ARC (Acquisition-Restoration-Conservation) Fund, which we established in June of 1987.

The extensive work done by Cooley Galleries included: removal of remnant soot and grime underlying the natural resin varnish, vapor treatment and beva lining on vacuum/hot table, filling and inpainting scattered flake losses up to 1/4" in size, applying synthetic resin varnish, and creating a new acid-free foam core backing.

### GEORGE ALBERT THOMPSON (1868-1938)

*George Albert Thompson was a landscape painter and master teacher. He was born in Connecticut in 1868 and was listed as living in New Haven in 1898. He is today best known for his Connecticut landscapes. Thompson studied at the Yale University School of Fine Arts and with the famed artist and master teacher, John La Farge, NYC. He also studied in Paris with such greats as Meison, Courtois, Blanc and Girardot. He exhibited quite successfully at the National Academy of Design, NYC (1898), Society of American Artists, NYC (1898), The Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, Philadelphia (1899-1901, 1907-1916), the Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. biennials (1916-1923), the New Haven Paint & Clay Club, New Haven, Ct (1924, prize awarded), and the Art Institute of Chicago. Thompson was also a master art teacher at the Yale University School of Fine Arts. He was elected a full member and the first President of the Paint & Clay Club (1905), a founder of the Mystic Art Association (1913) and President of the MAA (1930). Today, George Albert Thompson's works can be found in private and public collections, including the Mystic Art Center, the Bruce Museum, Greenwich, CT and the National Gallery of Uruguay.*



## Groton History Fair Sept. 17th

The Groton Public Library will present its second Groton History Fair on Saturday, September 17, from noon to 3 p.m. Organizations with ties to the history of the Groton/Mystic area will participate by promoting their activities and offering items for sale. The MRHS plans to have a table at this event and you're all invited to stop in and see what other history groups in our community are doing.

# MRHS Membership 2010-11

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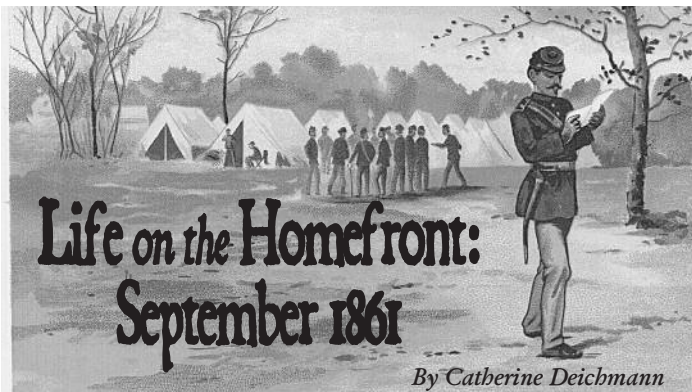
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*In honor of the Civil War sesquicentennial, I will be looking at the war month-by-month from the historic local point of view: Like the citizens of Mystic at the time, we have no idea how long the war will go, what the incredible cost will be, or even who will prevail in the end. It should be interesting to watch it 'unfold' in the months to come...*

As summer waned, President Lincoln's call for 100,000 men to serve for three years extinguished all hopes for a quick and decisive Union victory. At a "Grand Union Meeting" on August 30th, Hiram Appleman, a veteran of July's battle at Bull Run, appealed to men "who are not prevented from enlisting, either by ill health or business," to join his company for the new 8th CT Infantry. Aided by state and federal bounties, in just two weeks eighty men signed up. After electing Appleman as their Captain and Thomas Sheffield and Henry Morgan as his Lieutenants, the "Mystic Company" left by steamship for Norwich, where they dined at the Wauregan Inn before taking the train to Hartford.

Mystic's first three-year enlistee, Private Elisha Rathbun, wrote from Maryland, using nautical references that were very familiar to his audience at home. "Our ship (the CT 4th Regiment) has been drifting around here some time in the trade winds," he reported. Near Hagerstown

his company met up with "some of our old shipmates" from Mystic in the CT 5th. Rathbun described unrest in the ranks caused by the sudden extension of the term of enlistment. "You know some of these boys enlisted as three-months men," he wrote, "and then went immediately into the three-years regiments with little reflection. I understood it for myself, but doubtless there were some that honestly did not."

Mystic's affection and values accompanied its men to war. By September the ladies of Mystic River had supplied handkerchiefs, sheets and pillowcases, slippers, towels, and fifty-five pairs of socks to the war effort. "We notice that Mystic gives more than any other place of its size," the Mystic Pioneer crowed. A report that some of the new recruits in Captain Appleman's company were seen drinking before their departure drew an angry response. The Pioneer reminded the soldiers that the 4th regiment had taken the temperance pledge, and urged the 8th to follow suit.

Local shipyards were building gunboats and transports for the government. The Mallory yard's workforce reached one hundred men, and Maxson & Fish were hiring as well. Government agents seized the schooner R. Fowler and the bark Cavallo at their docks in Mystic under the new "Confiscation Act" because they were jointly owned by Northern and Southern investors. Months earlier, the Fowler had been seized by Florida authorities for the same reason. Her captain, John Eldridge, was forced to pay \$500 in fines to allow him to return to Mystic, only to have his vessel seized again!

The President called for a national day of "Fasting, Humiliation and Prayer" for September 26th. Afternoon services were held at the Congregational Church and evening services at the Baptist Church. Stores were closed, and most businesses suspended operation while the citizens of Mystic, and their Northern countrymen, prayed for strength to face the challenges ahead.



## Mystic River Historical Society Membership & Patronage Form ~

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Street: \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

### Annual Membership:

\$15/Individual  \$30/Family  \$50/Contributing  \$100/Benefactor  \$250/Sustaining  \$1000/Life Membership

### Patronage Support ~ Individual or Commercial:

\$100/Patron Individual or Business Name \_\_\_\_\_

Business Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Business Web \_\_\_\_\_

### Additional Gift Opportunity:

\$ \_\_\_\_\_ Gift in Memory and/or Appreciation of \_\_\_\_\_

*Acknowledgements will be in the above name. Our membership year is May 1 to April 30. Your contribution is tax deductible. Checks may be made payable to MRHS. Send to P.O. Box 245, Mystic, CT 06355*

# June Meeting Minutes

- Cathy Marco, Recording Secretary

The Board of Trustees of the Mystic River Historical Society met on Monday, June 20, 2011. Board Members and Committee Chairmen/members present were Aimée Allaire, Cynthia Allyn, Lou Allyn, David Evans, Lois Glazier, Sally Halsey, Judy Hicks, Jim Kimenker, Cathy Marco, Cathy Mauritz, Betty O'Donnell, John Porter, Jennifer Pryor and Stephanie Thorp.

**The Nominating Committee** presented their slate for new officers: *President Lou Allyn, Vice President John Porter, Treasurer Bill Everett, Recording Secretary Cathy Marco, Corresponding Secretary Lois Glazier.* A motion to accept the slate as presented was seconded and passed unanimously.

**New President's Report (Lou Allyn):** The next Board meeting will be in September, however we will keep informed via email. Lou said he was looking forward to serving again as President and that one of our major goals for the coming year will be to recruit new board members.

**Treasurers Report (sent Bill Everett):** Financials were sent to the Board prior to this meeting. Dorrie requested a correction which was made.

**Finance (Dave Evans):** No activity.

**Corresponding Secretary (Lois Glazier):** During the past two months, there were 21 thank you letters for renewals at Benefactor level; three thank you letters for renewals at Sustaining level; 16 thank you letters for gifts; two miscellaneous cards; one thank you for our April speaker; a thank you to Cat Feather Art; and thank you for monies from the Akeley Trust.

## STANDING COMMITTEES

**Buildings & Grounds (Alan Greener):** Again, many thanks to those who helped at our spring cleanup. Doug Hanna fixed our fluorescent lights.

**Curatorial (reported by Lou Allyn):** The committee met on June 13 with Jane Preston participating on Skype. • We received the annual contribution from the Akeley Trust and Dorrie has submitted her report to them regarding use of their collection during the past 12 months. • Most work continues as usual - consolidating collections & freeing up shelf space. • Dorrie will be away during July; coverage has been arranged thanks to Judy Hicks, Lou Allyn, Betsy Boucher and Louisa Watrous. • The oil painting restoration is complete and will be picked up this Thursday. • Judy Hicks has agreed to be the next Committee Chairman starting with our next meeting. • Information regarding NEMA's new Institutional Affiliate Membership and Museum Admission Program was emailed to the board.

**Education/Outreach (Cathy Mauritz):** Although we usually have our elementary school programs in the spring, Project LEARN requested a three day program in October for third graders. Joyce will be getting volunteers and Tim has also agreed to work on it. • The Fitch High School History Department Chairman is working with us on a possible program in maritime history to be conducted at Fitch. During the summer, work on such a program will be developed, if possible. This type of program may be of interest to other high schools in the area as well. • A question was raised of also discussing with local high schools whether students could get extra credits in history for attending our monthly membership meetings.

**IT Committee (Stephanie Thorp):** The System Administrator performed routine backups of all files on May 29, with the exception of MRHS3 (laptop) which is being temporarily unavailable for update due to use for preparation of the Hicks/Allyn presentation on Mystic's Noted Women. • Operating system, security, and other application software, including Windows, Java, Flash Player, and Office have been updated and/or verified to be at the most current version. • Past Perfect data files were backed up both to the Western Digital hard drive and to offsite secure storage. The system was fully operational at the completion of the update, including both printers, which were properly functioning & accessible from any computer. • An up-to-date copy of the MRHS membership list was installed on each of the computers - MRHS1 and 2.

**Marketing (Sally Halsey):** Will send a PR after tonight's meeting with new Board members and Officers.

**Membership (Cynthia Allyn):** The updated membership list will be published in the September newsletter.

**Newsletter (Jennifer Pryor):** Copy and print deadlines for the 2011-12 newsletters has been provided. The next Volume, 38, will begin in September with an August 19 copy deadline.

**Program (Aimee Allaire):** All who attended the Annual Meeting & Potluck on May 25th thoroughly enjoyed Rick Spencer's program, The Greatest Hits of the Civil War: America's First Professional Songwriters. About 40 members were in attendance. Thank you to everyone who came, brought food and helped set-up and clean-up, especially Louisa and Sally for all their efforts that evening.

The Program Committee met on June 9. The 2011-12 program schedule is almost completely firmed up, and should be an exciting one for all. The committee hopes to see even more of our members and trustees enjoying the programs in the coming year. There is a huge thank you to all the Program Committee members: Lou Allyn, Bettye

Noyes, Betty O'Donnell, John Porter and Louisa Watrous, for all of their work, ideas and dedication to bringing great programs to the membership.

The Committee reviewed the April & May programs. It was agreed that they had all gone very well; however, concern was raised about the lack of attendance at the annual meeting. Two changes were recommended to the Board:

a) The potluck dinner will be separated from the annual meeting and will be held in conjunction with the normal March membership meeting. b) members provided an excess of desserts and a shortage of other items. At the next potluck, members will be asked to bring a main dish, vegetable or salad and MRHS will provide desserts and drinks.

The Committee decided that Robert Thorson, a UConn Geology Professor, author, and expert on rock walls and their preservation will be asked to speak. Aimée will work on contacting him. The Committee Chair will also contact the Church Secretary to advise them of our requirements for our membership meetings.

**Special Events** (*Reported by Sally Halsey for Joyce Everett*): About 30 people attended the unveiling of the Keith Classroom plaque. Donna Keith Baron did the honors, and was very pleased at the recognition of all the things her parents did for the MRHS. Thanks to everyone who brought food to share.

2013 House Tour work continues and still needs a 'name' reflective of a vital and vibrant downtown where people live and work, including artists. Karen Barthelson from the Mystic Art Center is getting involved. Our next meeting is in July, where we'll start to seriously identify the locations we'd like to have.

The early October bus trip is in the planning stages - dates are not yet determined. It will be a one-night trip to Southern New Hampshire. Joyce is organizing it and Sally has agreed to lead it.

**Walking Tour** (*David Evans*): No report.

**UNFINISHED BUSINESS:** "Colors of Mystic" book will now be also sold at The Whalers Inn. Bank Square Books has obtained more copies as well as our DVDs.

**NEW BUSINESS:** Jim Kimenker has agreed to continue his column in the newsletter with a revised title. • David Evans suggested MRHS present a possible periodic (i.e. annual) new award or certificate for a house or project representing the best in renovation or construction. Some ideas were offered by the Board for example, there should be work done on defining award criteria and there should be a committee.

*The next meeting will be held at 7:00 pm on September 19, 2011, at the Mystic & Noank Library.*

*Respectfully submitted,  
Cathy Marco*

# Keith Legacy in Outreach

- Russ Leonard

For about two decades Helen Keith organized and planned the Outreach Program for area schools. It was a very popular and educational enterprise largely due to her skills in communication and her knowledge of local public and private schools.

I had the pleasure of being "Mr. Potter", the School Master, for sixteen of those years. It was great fun. In our fledging years, always creative Helen arranged to have a mock session serve as the program for a regular Society meeting. She also hit upon the idea of participating in Mystic's First Night. I didn't think we could compete with all the entertainment offerings, but for our two performances families flooded the classroom to the point of being turned away at the door. Upstairs "the students" were of all ages and sizes but they loved the silly rules and formality and severity of life in the 1840s. The crowd of adults encircled the dimly lit classroom pressing against the space heaters. It was an exciting event. Nothing succeeds like success, so the next year we gave three performances.

Later, at one point, Helen figured that more than 4,000 children had visited Portersville Academy. It was the apex of school field trips, and a highlight of my retirement. Here's hoping you keep the spirit of Helen Keith alive!

~ Russ Leonard a.k.a. Mr. Potter

P.S. I retired as principal of Mary Morrisson and Pleasant Valley Schools and a teacher at S.B. Butler and Mystic Academy.

## *Editors Note:*

*Earlier this year, a brass plaque in honor of Helen and George Keith was installed at the entrance to the classroom at Portersville Academy. The plaque was unveiled at ceremony and reception attended by MRHS members and friends & family of the Keiths on June 5th, 2011.*



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## Events Calendar

**Membership Meeting**  
 Wed., Sept. 28th 2011, 7:30p  
 Congregational Church Parish Hall  
*Casey Zahn ~ Hook 'Em While*  
*They're Young: Getting Children*  
*Interested in History*

**Membership Meeting**  
 Wed., Oct. 26th, 2011, 7:30p  
 Congregational Church Parish Hall  
*Judy Hicks - Four Women of Mystic*

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*The Mystic River Historical Society Portersville Press would like to thank all of the Patrons for their support throughout the 2011-12 publication season. We encourage readers to also offer appreciation and patronage.*

# MRHS Annual Membership Listing Inside - Page Four

The information included on page four is a list of our active memberships paid for the membership year beginning May 2011. We make every effort to ensure this information is as accurate as possible, but sometimes things fall through the cracks. If you have paid this year's dues and are not listed, please contact Cynthia Allyn, Membership Chair, at (860) 536-9363. If you meant to renew your membership and have not done so, please use the form inside this newsletter on page five.

*- Cynthia Allyn, Membership Chair*

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