

January 2009



A Newsletter for the Volunteers of the 1820 Col. Benjamin Stephenson House

The Volunteer

RoxAnn Raisner, Director

2009 Special Events & Activities

January 15 - Annual Dinner & Auction 6-9 PM (fundraiser) **\$35 per person**

Join other members and friends in celebrating another successful year of operation. Your participation in a silent as well as an oral auction will help the Stephenson House have a successful 2009.

February 4 - Book Discussion 7-9 PM **Free**

(Held first Wednesday of each even-numbered month.)

Read and discuss period-relevant books. *Ladies of Liberty* by Cokie Roberts and *Mr. Jefferson's Women* by Jon Kukla are two previous titles. The title for February is *The Lincolns: Portrait of a Marriage* by Daniel Mark Epstein.

February 6 & 7 - Valentine's Dinner 6-9 PM (fundraiser) **\$75 per person**

Come experience the romance of a 19th-century dinner, complete with live music. Eat food prepared from historic recipes, and imagine yourself there with the Stephensons. Guests will be treated to a sumptuous six-course dinner, served by authentically dressed staff. Seating is limited. Reservations required. *The house will be closed during both days to prepare for the evening event.*

February 14 & 15 - The Other Families: Indentured Servants' Responsibilities in the Stephenson House 2-4 PM

Come see what life was like for the indentured servants as they labored for the Stephenson family. Experience how they cooked, baked, and made items (e.g., candles, quilts, and baskets) for use by the Stephensons. Listen to stirring tales that indentured servants would have heard in the servants' quarters...and more.

February-March Exploring Antiques Series (in partnership with LCCC)

This three-part lecture and demonstration series is sponsored by Lewis and Clark Community College and the Col. Benjamin Stephenson House. It deals with the field of American antiques, with a focus on the 1780s to 1850s. Sessions will be held at the Lewis and Clark Nelson Center in Edwardsville on February 15 and 22, and March 1, 2009, 1-3 PM. Fees for the lecture series are to be announced.

• Session I, February 15 - Furniture 1-3 PM

Al Cussenelli, a dealer, appraiser, and connoisseur of antique furniture, will provide a hands-on look at both formal and country furniture, including regional examples, from the late 18th century through the Empire period. Using his collection and other examples, Cussenelli will show attendees the characteristics, materials, and craftsmanship of early furnishings.

• Session II, February 22 - Ceramics & Glass 1-3 PM

Sid Denny, Ph.D., and Betty Boyd will jointly present the field of ceramics, pottery, and glass from the 1790s to the 1850s. Makers, their marks, styles, and materials will be discussed. Examples from the collection of the Col. Benjamin Stephenson House will be discussed, as well as many others.

• Session III, March 1 - Textiles & Clothing 1-3 PM

Elizabeth Bowling of Florissant, Mo., long-time student

of period textiles, sewing techniques, and historical American and European fashions, will discuss the history of early-American fashion and the textiles used in a home of the 1800s. Examples of fabrics and reproduction clothing will be shared. RoxAnn Raisner, site director of the Col Benjamin Stephenson House, will assist with this interesting presentation.

March 15 - Family Fun Sunday 1-3 PM (fundraiser) **\$25 per family**

Parents and children together experience life in the 1800s by playing games, making candles, and weaving baskets.

April 1 - Book Discussion - 7-9 PM **Free**

(Held first Wednesday of each even-numbered month.)

Read and discuss period-relevant books. The title for April is *Burr* by Gore Vidal.

April 18 & May 2 - Clothed in Modesty: Making a Woman's Early-19th-Century Neckline Filler 12-4 PM **Class \$35, supplies/instructions \$12.**

During the early 19th century, women typically filled the necklines of their high-waisted gowns with lightweight modesty cloths or false shirts—the historical equivalent of a modern “dickey.” Learn to make this garment for your reenacting wardrobe. Project is completely hand sewn. Some hand-sewing experience required. Limit 10 students.

Bring Sewing Kit: pins, small and large fabric scissors, small sewing needle, white cotton sewing thread, measuring tape, and marking pencil or washable marker for fabric.

Note: At least one week before class date, you must contact the instructor with the following measurements: neck, shoulder width, bust, under bust (bra band), and length from throat to under bust.

June 3 - Book Discussion - 7-9 PM **Free**

(Held first Wednesday of each even-numbered month.)

Read and discuss period-relevant books. The title for June will be chosen at April's meeting.

(Continued on page 7)

Welcome New Volunteer!

Veronika Jones



News & Needful Things

THANKS:

- Thank you, Karen Mateyka, for the donation of a glass hurricane candle shade and for two gowns for the women's wardrobe.
- Thank you, Jim and Gloria Zupanci, for the donation of old candle wax for demonstrations.

WANTED:

- medium-weight linen for ladies' mitts
- cotton or linen tea towels
- old wool clothing with a 95% or greater wool content for use in a rug-hooking class
- child's and male dress forms (torsos)
- tin pie pans and plates

NOTICE:

- **If you currently have a volunteer training manual (purple cover) and are no longer using it, please return it to the house ASAP. We have only one copy in the library.**

FYI:

- Historical clothing patterns are available for sign-out by people to make their own garb. Contact RoxAnn for a list of patterns and fabric swatches.
- Stephenson House will begin operating on the winter schedule at the end of the month. During January and February, the house will be open on weekends only or by appointment. Regular operating hours resume March 5, 2009.

New to the Wardrobe: What's Old is New Again!



This month, two new dresses were added to the women's wardrobe. To be honest, both items have been in the wardrobe for some time. But for a variety of reasons—including non-historical colors and styles—both needed a historical “redo.”

Do you recognize them? Neither dress looks like its original version. Completely deconstructed, the dresses were re-dyed, re-cut, and reassembled using historical methods.

The cotton dress modeled by Kathy Schmidt (*left*) was originally peach colored and had a mock bib front. During militia muster weekend in October, the gown was submerged in a vat of walnut dye, changing the color to a soft butternut. The left sleeve now has a very large period patch (*see lower front edge of sleeve*). This repair was necessary after the sleeve caught fire during the drying process. This garment, appropriate for a work dress, is similar to clothing worn by early-19th-century female servants.

The linen dress modeled by our dress form Beulah (*right*) was originally a dark teal. It was fashioned in the style of the late 1820s to early 1830s, making it inappropriate for Stephenson House, which depicts 1818-1825. After several hours submerged in strong red dye, the fabric changed to dark navy. Refashioned in a c. 1820 style, it is now a usable garment for our docents.

Both dresses are good examples of recycling something old into something new, just as our foremothers would have done when clothing their own families.



The Needler by Elizabeth Bowling

Making Something (More) Historical Out of What You Own

— This article is the first in a continuing series about taking something that is already at hand, and trying to improve it. —

People of the 19th century repeatedly patched, mended, and restyled the clothes that they had, in order to stay presentable and at least somewhat current with fashion. If that was no longer possible, clothing was cut down, restyled, and passed along to other members of the family. Ultimately clothes were recycled entirely into items such as quilts.

The same is true of us, as we learn about clothing. We all own something that we bought when we started doing living history, or that was given to us as beginners. Today we realize that it could be better. The challenge now is to make that clothing more appropriate or, if that is not possible, to adapt it for some other use.

What We Have

The dress for this project was one of a pair donated to the BSH wardrobe by director Karen Mateyka after she made new clothing for herself at the Past Patterns workshop and at bi-monthly Sewing Circle meetings. (Go, Karen! And thank you for your donation.)



Close-ups of bodice front and back on donated gown.



Donated gown, before alteration.

What's Not Right?

While cotton “cross-over” or wrap-around frocks (bodice and skirt attached, and wrapping as one) were worn at the very beginning of the high-waisted era (c. 1796), they were not typically seen after the close of the 1800s. In addition, the fabric in such gowns tended to be very gauzy, transparent cotton, known at the time as “muslin.”

Further, in the two examples of surviving long-sleeved cotton gowns with a free-falling sleeve cap, the full-length sleeve was made of the same fabric as the main garment. And the cap itself was a single piece of bias-cut cloth.

Finally, people of the early 19th century did not have the color choices that exist today. Many natural pigments were available before the introduction of chemical dyes in the

1850s. But most of them were not colorfast. Garments that were made to be washed (cotton, linen, or cotton-linen combinations) had to be natural (unbleached), white (bleached), or printed or dyed with a colorfast dye. Historically, that meant blue, brown, red, or black.

What Are Our Needs?

While the house wardrobe could use another historically appropriate woman's gown, there was not enough reusable fabric (the dark print of the body and skirt) in the donated item to make a full, adult-sized garment. However, we did recently learn that additional clothing for the children's bedroom, in smaller sizes, was needed for tours.

Using the yardage from a woman's skirt was a common way to make new clothing without buying fabric. And re-dyeing is both simple, and historically appropriate. We therefore decided to use fabric from Karen's dress to make a child's frock, which would then be dyed to a historically appropriate color.

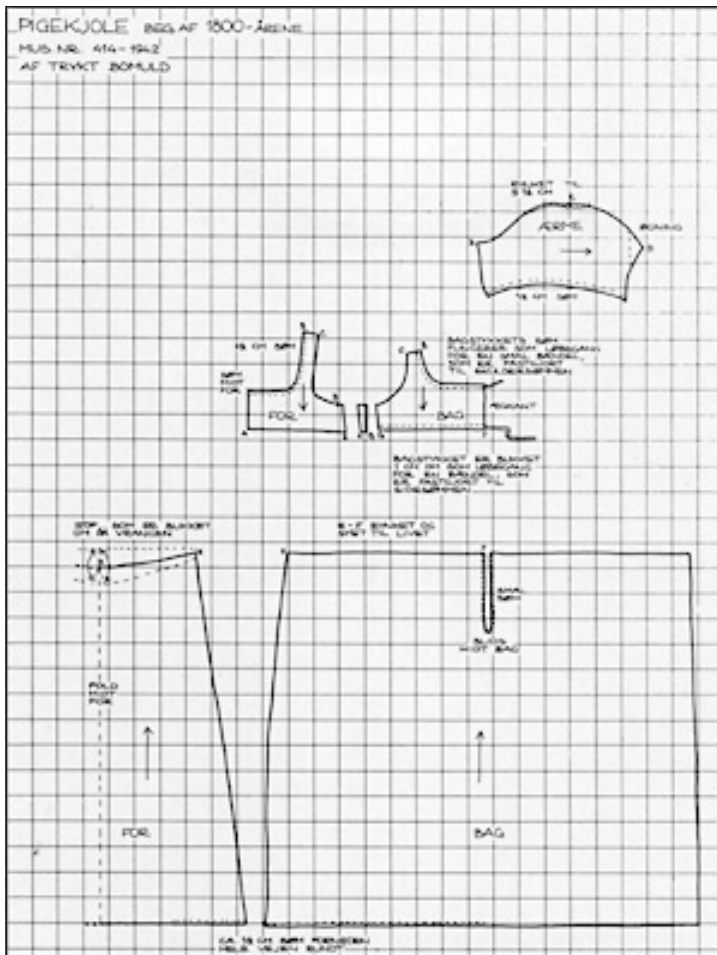
Choosing a Pattern

The Stephenson children—born in 1803, 1806, 1809, and 1812—would all have worn simple, high-waisted gowns when they were small. Boys of the early 19th century wore such clothes until they were fully toilet trained (“breeched”). Girls continued to wear them, with few modifications, into adolescence and womanhood.



The inspiration for our project—a child's cotton dress, c. 1800-1810 (front and back).

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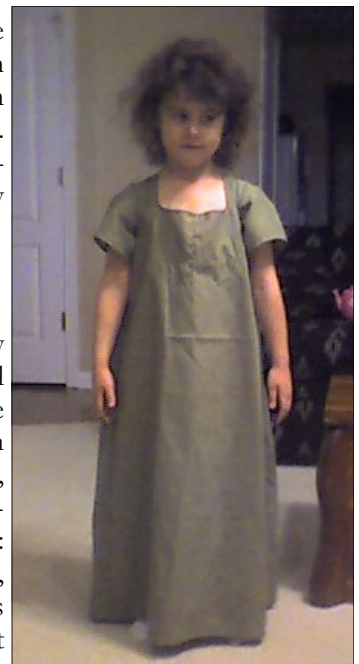


Scale drawing of cutting diagram for c. 1800-1810 child's dress.

tern pieces (sq. in.). These we used to cut the fabric from Karen's disassembled gown into pieces for a child's dress. Skirt panels were cut, according to the diagram, as slightly gores rectangular blocks.

The Assembled Dress

The gown was assembled by hand over a period of several days. Then, in addition to the features of the original Danish gown, we added the following, which were typical of children's clothing of the period: growth tucks in sleeves, growth tucks in hem, and ties in the front neckline to adjust fit. All of these will help to make the gown more adaptable for show and tell, and will provide discussion points with educational content.

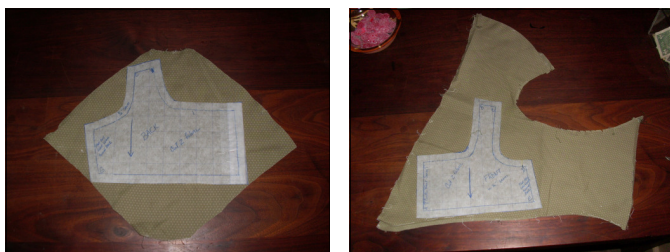


AFTER - The assembled gown before re-dyeing, modeled by Gillen Raisner.

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The collections of the Danish National Museum in Copenhagen include a child's cotton gown, dated 1800-1810, with many typical early-19th-century features. These include a high waist; a low neckline; short, tubular sleeves; a columnar skirt with fullness toward the back; a small print, repeated at regular intervals; and a washable fabric. Detailed photographs (page 3) and a cutting diagram (above) were also available.



Disassembled dress pieces prepared for cutting. Enough fabric was salvaged from the original dress that two child-sized dresses can be constructed.

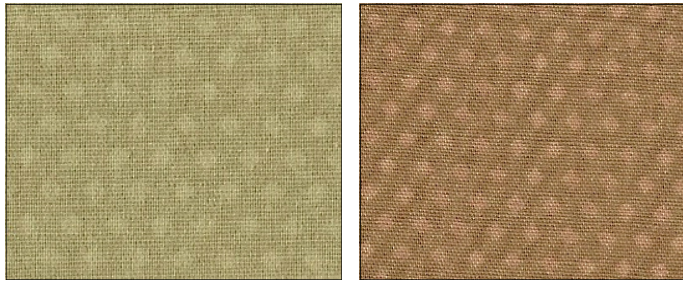
Cutting Pieces

Using the gridded layout provided by the museum (sq. mm), we expanded the scaled drawings into full-sized pat-



AFTER - The completed gown after re-dyeing, modeled by Thomas Csar-Kellenberger.

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BEFORE - A swatch of the original cotton fabric, which was dark olive green with small diamonds of lighter, greenish yellow.

AFTER - A swatch of the fabric after over dyeing, showing a medium brown with diamonds of pinkish tan

The Dress Re-Dyed

We chose brown as the target color. This, as well as pink, was a common shade for children's clothing in the 19th century. Brown was also something that could actually be achieved by over dyeing our existing fabric, which was a dark but non-historical olive cotton.



Reproduction child's shift.

After several days in a bath of combined "tangerine," "sierra sunrise," and "scarlet" cold-water dyes—the combination of which was a vivid orange—the dress emerged a medium brown with a design of small diamonds in a lighter, pinkish tan.

Underneath

Finally, we knew that 19th-century children, like their elders, wore historical underclothing. We therefore made a reproduction child's shift of white batiste. As shown in the photo (above), this is simply a miniature of the shift worn by women.

Approximate time for the entire project was seventy hours.

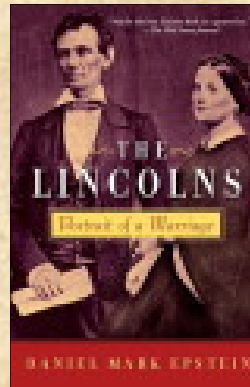
Check the Chest

The completed gown and shift are in the children's bedroom, awaiting use during house tours and field trips. Information sheets with suggested discussion points accompany them.



The new child's gown and shift, with information sheets

Join the Friends of the
Benjamin Stephenson House,
February 4, 2009
7-9 p.m. to discuss:



The Lincolns: Portrait of a Marriage

by Daniel Mark Epstein

Please come enjoy the lively
discussion, good friends, and
tasty treats.

Future book discussions include:

April 1—*Burr* by Gore Vidal

Call the Stephenson House
at 692-1818 if you have questions.

Volunteer Recognition

The following is a list of the top ten volunteers of the month. This list is based on the number of hours each volunteer worked and recorded in the volunteer hours log book. We appreciate all the time our volunteers give each month, regardless of total hours worked. Thanks to each and every one of our volunteers!

1. Maxine Callies
2. Ellen Nordhauser
3. Amy Mullane
4. Walt Raisner
5. Rudy Wilson
6. Bob Jurgena
7. Ron Goldsmith
8. Jill Allaria
9. Lisa Shashek
10. Veronica Jones

Volunteer of Excellence: Amy Mullane



Volunteer Amy Mullane now sports a wardrobe that is historical from the skin out.

Amy (*left*) wears a shift, neck cloth, and cap of her own making. Her 1820 stay, or corset (not visible here), was made by historical seamstress Holly Turner of Potosi, Mo.

Amy's gown—the newest addition to her wardrobe—is made of a reproduction fabric from Old Sturbridge Village. The fabric design and color are historically terrific. Amy sewed the gown herself at Sewing Circle meetings and with assistance from site director RoxAnn Raisner.

The shawl is a modern piece with characteristics of the early 19th century, purchased from eBay.

Congratulations, Amy!

From the Hearth: Sheppard's Pie

2 lbs. ground beef
1 tablespoon oil
2 onions finely chopped
2 tomatoes chopped or one small can of peeled, diced tomatoes
1 cup beef stock or bouillon
1/2 teaspoon thyme
1/4 teaspoon sage
1 tablespoon chopped parsley
5 medium potatoes (boiled and mashed)
1/2 teaspoon thyme
1 tablespoon butter or bacon fat
salt and pepper

Pre-heat oven to 375 degrees. Brown the beef in oil. Remove from pan and set aside. Drain most of the accumulated fat from the pan. Sauté onions until tender, and then add chopped tomatoes and cook for 2-3 minutes. Add broth and stir in herbs and seasonings. Return brown meat to skillet and continue cooking for 5 minutes. Transfer all ingredients to an ovenproof casserole. Top with mashed potatoes (scoring them with a fork.) Dot with butter and bake uncovered in 375-degree oven for 30-40 minutes.



Front cover of *The Kitchen Companion and House-Keepers Own Book* published in Philadelphia in 1844. (New York Public Library, Science and Technology Center)

JANUARY 2009

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
				1 New Year's Day Closed	2 Closed	3
4	5	6	7	8 Closed	9 Closed	10
11 Sewing Circle	12	13	14	15 Tour Annual Dinner	16 Closed	17
18	19	20	21	22 Closed	23 Closed	24
25 Sewing Circle	26	27	28	29 Closed	30 Closed	31



- January 9, Reservation deadline for Stephenson House Annual Dinner & Auction.
- January 11, **Sewing Circle**, 1-3 p.m.
- January 15, **Adult Tour**, 10 a.m.-12 p.m., 35 adults
- January 15, **Stephenson House Annual Dinner & Auction**, 6 p.m., N. O. Nelson Campus of Lewis and Clark Community College, \$35 per person. Reservations due by January 9.
- January 25, **Sewing Circle**, 1-3 p.m.

(Continued from page 1)

June, July & August Camps for Kids

- **Archeology Camp – June 15-19**
Learn about the life of an archeologist and participate in an archeological dig. Open to children grades 3-5. A morning session (9 AM-12 PM) or an afternoon session (1-4 PM) is offered. Limited registration.
- **Pioneer Camp – July 6-10**
Learn about life of an Illinois Territory pioneer during this hands-on historic camp. Campers will participate in various activities common in the daily lives of early Illinois residents. Open to children grades 3-5. A morning session (9 AM-12 PM) or an afternoon session (1-4 PM) is offered. Limited registration.
- **One-Room Schoolhouse Camp – August 3-7**
Experience what learning was like in a one-room, 19th-century schoolhouse. Campers will participate in various activities common in the daily lives of early Illinois residents. Open to children grades 2-5. A morning session (9 AM-12 PM) or an afternoon session (1-4 PM) is offered. Limited registration.

June 27 - Story time at the Stephenson House 1-2 PM **Free**

Gather under the old shade tree to listen to stories of adventure and fun. During the months of June through October, guest storytellers will entertain visiting children with stories of the past, fantastical worlds, and distant cultures. *Children must be accompanied by an adult.*

July 12 - Ben's Birthday Celebration (fundraiser)

Bring the whole family and join in an early-19th-century birthday celebration! Games, food, artisans, and more.

July 25 - Story time at the Stephenson House 1-2 PM **Free**

Gather under the old shade tree to listen to stories of adventure and fun. During the months of June through October, guest storytellers will entertain visiting children with stories of the past, fantastical worlds, and distant cultures. *Children must be accompanied by an adult.*

August 5 - Book Discussion 7-9 PM **Free**

(Held first Wednesday of each even-numbered month.)

Read and then discuss period-relevant books. The book for August will be chosen at June's meeting.

August 29 - Story time at the Stephenson House 1-2 PM **Free**

Gather under the old shade tree to listen to stories of adventure and fun. During the months of June through October, guest storytellers will entertain visiting children with stories of the past, fantastical worlds, and distant cultures. *Children must be accompanied by an adult.*

September 26 - Story time at the Stephenson House 1-2 PM **Free**

Gather under the old shade tree to listen to stories of adventure and fun. During the months of June through October, guest storytellers will entertain visiting children with stories of the past, fantastical worlds, and distant cultures. *Children must be accompanied by an adult.*

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October 1-31 - Mourning Benjamin Stephenson Exhibit

General Admission

Join the Stephenson family and Edwardsville in mourning one of the town's founding fathers. Experience the customs that grieving families practiced, and say goodbye to Colonel Benjamin Stephenson as he lies in state in the parlor of his home. Watch as lawyers begin cataloging the Stephensons' personal items for the probate records, and as Lucy prepares to auction off her belongings.

October 7 - Book Discussion 7-9 PM *Free*

(Held first Wednesday of each even-numbered month.)

Read and discuss period-relevant books. The title for October will be chosen at August's meeting.

October 11 - 50/50 Auction *Free Admission*

Check your attics and basements for antiques, memorabilia, and collectibles, then bring them to the seventh annual 50/50 auction. Proceeds are split 50/50 with the house, or you may choose to donate the entire sale proceeds. The auction features a large assortment of quality items. *House tours will not be available during this event, but the museum gift shop will be open.*

October 24 - Story time at the Stephenson House 1-2 PM

Gather under the old shade tree to listen to stories of adventure and fun. During the months of June through October, guest storytellers will entertain visiting children with stories of the past, fantastical worlds, and distant cultures. *Children must be accompanied by an adult.*

October 24 & 25 - Muster of Col. Stephenson's Militia *General Admission*

Citizen soldiers gather at Stephenson House to take up arms in defense of

their homes. Visitors will view a militia encampment, soldiers' daily routine, and preparations for the expedition led by Col. Stephenson during the War of 1812.

November 27 & 28 - Candlelight Tours 6-9 PM *General Admission*

Experience Stephenson House in the ambiance of 19th-century candlelight. Enjoy live music and see the house decked out in Christmas glory.

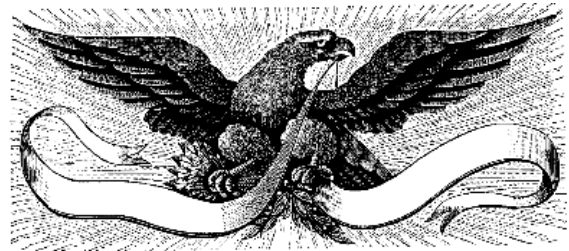
December 2 - Book Discussion 7-9 PM *Free*

(Held first Wednesday of each even-numbered month.)

Read and discuss period-relevant books. The title for December will be chosen at October's meeting.

December 5 - Father Christmas 1-3 PM *General Admission*

Get into the Christmas spirit and bring the family to see Father Christmas while he visits Stephenson House to celebrate St. Nicholas Day. Listen to his tales of the holidays, and watch out for his brother Rupert. Enjoy a holiday tour of the Stephenson House.



The Volunteer

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