



# Green Mountain AAUW

*American Association of University Women of Vermont*

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## ***The Early Vermont AAUW and Its Drive for the Improvement of Rural Schools***

*(based on the research of Sylvia Bugbee)*

In April of 1920, the Nineteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution was one state short of ratification. On the 21st of that month, a large group of women gathered in Montpelier in a freezing drizzle to pressure Governor Percival Clement into calling a special session of the Vermont Legislature to make Vermont “the perfect 36th state” to ratify the amendment. He refused to do so. It was not the first time that Governor Clement had stood in the way of women’s right to vote in Vermont. The 1919 presidential suffrage vote passed in the Vermont Legislature but was vetoed by Clement on the excuse that it was an “infringement of the rights guaranteed by the state constitution”.

Perhaps that is one reason why Pearl Randall Wasson, the first full-time Dean of Women at the University of Vermont, chose that particular time to call together a small group of women college graduates in Vermont with the purpose of forming a state branch of the American Association of University Women. Certainly it was no coincidence: not only were women about to achieve the right to vote, but Dean Wasson had also been instrumental in persuading national AAUW to approve UVM for accreditation in that same year, in part by establishing the Women’s Student Government Association on campus. Accreditation meant that graduates of UVM could attain full membership in the AAUW.

In July 1920, the University of Vermont Alumnae Club met. By the end of the meeting, they had voted to call it the first gathering of the Vermont American Association of University Women.

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### **AAUW Mission:**

Advance equity for women and girls through advocacy, education, and research.

### **AAUW Value Promise:**

As a member of AAUW, you belong to a community that breaks educational and economic barriers so that all women have a fair chance.

## ***2010 is the 90<sup>th</sup> Birthday of AAUW of Vermont!***

This is an event worth celebrating and we plan to do so at a special meeting at St. Michael’s College on April 24, 2010. (See page 3 for the meeting announcement.)

You may wonder why AAUW was founded in Vermont, who some of our early members were and what they accomplished in the 1920’s. We are fortunate that the early AAUW papers are archived at the University of Vermont in the Bailey Howe Library. In 1989, history graduate student Sylvia Bugbee was hired as an antiquarian intern to organize the collection of AAUW papers. Sylvia wrote a history paper based on her research of the material and I was able to obtain a copy of that paper through the efforts of Mariafranca Morselli. The article in this newsletter issue is based on Sylvia Bugbee’s research. Some of the material was reported in 1995 for our 75<sup>th</sup> birthday.

Our current five branches are all over 80 years old. By the end of the 1920’s there were AAUW members in every county in Vermont and in dozens of towns according to the archives. Current Vermont AAUW members hope to share a little more of our history in the spring 2010 newsletter and at the April state meeting in Burlington.

Gudrun Hutchins, Editor

## ***AAUW and Health Care***

*Andrea Weisberg, State President*

Perhaps nothing has been discussed so intensely by voters recently as President Obama's strong directive to Congress to pass a universal health care bill. At the end of November, The house passed a Health Care Reform Bill, the farthest reaching health care overhaul in 40 years. Many of AAUW's key priorities were included in the Affordable Health Care for America Act including coverage for maternity care, preventive care and an end to gender rating. These protections for women are among those most supported by our organization

Unfortunately, anti-choice representatives also passed an amendment that severely undermines women's access to safe and complete reproductive health care services. Representative Bart Stupak's amendment will eliminate coverage for abortion services in the public option and in private insurance companies participating in the bill's health care exchanges. This amendment prohibits women who receive federal subsidies from purchasing a comprehensive insurance plan that includes abortion services. Millions of women who have this coverage now would lose it. AAUW is urging women to contact their senators today and urge them to oppose any amendments that jeopardize women's access to complete reproductive health care coverage. For more information, read AAUW's position paper on health care reform.

On a more positive note, the U.S. Deputy Secretary of Labor, expressed to the Senate the Obama administration's strong support for the Healthy Families Act. This Act provides for workplace flexibilities and increased economic security. With nearly 40 percent of private sector workers not receiving paid sick leave, parents, most probably women, are forced to send their sick children to school and go to work sick themselves.

AAUW believes that creating work environments that help employees balance the responsibilities of work and family is a good public policy. Urge your representative to cosponsor the Healthy Families Act to ensure American workers will be able to care for themselves and their families during times when illness is present.

.....and we wonder on what our national dues dollars are spent. Well, here are a couple of items worthy of our lobbying efforts in the U.S. Congress.

With that said, I am wishing you all a happy holiday season and a wonderful New Year.

## ***Women Are Moving!***

*Jennifer Kern, State Membership Chair*

The year 2009 has been a banner year for women and girls. Which is proof positive that as an organization we are moving mountains, creating waves, and breaking through barriers.

### ***JUST THINK!***

- The first bill passed this year was the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act.
- More victims of gender related hate crimes are being protected under federal hate crime laws.
- We now have a new record for women in Congress: 95!
- Family issues like health care, making higher education affordable, and paid parental leave are being represented by Congress and championed by individuals like President Obama and the late Senator Kennedy, to name a few.
- The Supreme Court has another woman's voice that will uphold the rights of all Americans.
- NEW! White House Council on Women and Girls; Office of Global Women's Issues.
- American women are one step closer to having a place of honor that we rightly deserve on the National Mall in Washington, D.C.

### ***SPREAD THE WORD!***

Joining AAUW connects you to a dynamic group of women on the local, state and national level. All of us are forcing doors open to create a world where

***EQUITY WILL **NOT** BE AN ISSUE!***

***The Burlington Branch  
Cordially invites you to our***

***“Alternate Convention Meeting”  
and  
90<sup>th</sup> Birthday Celebration  
of AAUW of Vermont***

***April 24, 2010 at 11:30 am  
St. Michael’s College  
Colchester, Vermont***

***Topic: Breaking Barriers in Advocacy,  
Education and Research***

***A panel of women with experience in one of  
these topic areas will provide answers to the  
questions:***

***Where are we today?  
Where will we be 25 years from now?  
What barriers will we break through  
to get there?***

***Lunch will be served, and in keeping with  
AAUW of Vermont’s 90<sup>th</sup> birthday we will  
celebrate with a cake and a little history.***

***Watch the spring state newsletter for  
registration information and more details.  
Please save the date and plan to attend!***

***Why are we having an  
“Alternate Convention Meeting”?***

At the state board meeting in Randolph on September 26, 2009, Vermont AAUW leaders discussed future state conventions and concluded that having a state convention every year was too much work for the host branch. We agreed on a plan to hold an all-day state convention every other year in the future and a shorter program with a luncheon in the intervening years. The Burlington Branch agreed to host this event in the spring of 2010 and has extended the invitation above. Please plan to join the celebration!

## ***International Affairs***

*Peg Galgano, State International Affairs Chair*

The cold months ahead can be a wonderful time for reading. I have included a few of the authors and titles suggested on the AAUW International Affairs Committee's reading list. They are intended to introduce the reader to global women's issues. The books focus on the lives of women who have made a difference in promoting peace and advancing the welfare of women, and on issues facing women in other cultures. Descriptions of contents are omitted, due to space, but I will happily forward the complete list and descriptions if you contact me at [fpgalgano@gmavt.net](mailto:fpgalgano@gmavt.net). We now live in such a small world; I know you will find some of these books interesting.

Adichie, Chimamanda Ngozi: *Purple Hibiscus*  
Ahmed, Leila: *Women and Gender in Islam*  
Albright, Madeleine: *Madame Secretary*  
Betancourt, Ingrid: *Until Death do us Part*  
Gildersleeve, Virginia: *Many a Good Crusade*  
Hirsi Ali, Ayaan: *Infidel*  
Maathai, Wangari: *Unbowed: A Memoir*  
Mortenson, Greg and David Oliver Relin: *Three Cups of Tea*  
Sadat, Jehan: *A Woman of Egypt*  
Twist, Lkynne: *The Soul of Money*  
Nafisi Azar: *Reading Lolita in Tehran*

## ***AAUW Fellowships and Grants***

*Kathy Corrao, Fellowships and Grants Chair*

Vermont is proud to have three AAUW fellowship recipients for 2009-10. Kathy Johnson was awarded a Career Development Grant and is studying at Champlain College. Kelly A. Mills-Dick received an American Fellowship to further her studies in Social Work at Boston University. Stella Ajabji from Cameroon received a second International Fellowship to continue her studies in Sustainable Development at The School for International Training.

Our donations to fellowships and grants (formerly the Educational Foundation) provide the funds for these awards. Branch donations should be sent to Kathy at 52 Corrao Road, Randolph Center, VT 05061. Please make the check payable to “AAUW Funds” with Fellowships and Grants in the memo line.

## ***Program Planning Ideas for 2010***

*Diane Telford, State Program Chair*

The Program in a Box program on the national website has been around now for over a year. New offerings emerge from time to time. The newest addition is "The Shriver Report – A Woman's Nation Changes Everything." The report focuses on the realization that "for the first time in our nation's history, women represent half of all workers and are becoming the primary breadwinners in more families than ever before." The entire report can be found at

<http://awomansnation.com/preface.php>

The report is long, but there is a good executive summary to be found there. Controversy abounds around the implications of the report. A number of responses appeared in various media and on websites.

Couple this with an article in the Sunday, November 29, 2009 edition of the *Burlington Free Press* titled, "Where the Boys Aren't" which describes the changing makeup of students at UVM and all college campuses. According to a table embedded in this article which is based on information from the National Center for Education Statistics, in 1960 61.9% of students were male while 38.1% were female whereas in 2009 44.2% are male and 55.8% are female. These numbers certainly support notions presented in the Shriver report and would seem to indicate that women will continue to be breadwinners in more and more families. Some obvious questions to ponder include:

- What impact will this have on the earnings gap, most recently women are earning 77 cents to the dollar that men are earning?
- Will more women be breaking the glass ceiling?
- What changes might result in the workplace and in society?

Even if you don't use the Program in the Box for this topic, I'm sure your branch program based on this report will result in a lively discussion. Other program ideas may evolve out of those discussions.

On another note and for other ideas, I have compiled some program titles found on branch

websites in California, Massachusetts, Michigan, Pennsylvania and Ohio. By the way, in my random wanderings around the web, I can attest to the quality and focus of the programs being presented in Vermont. Great job program chairs!

Facing Choices and Challenges presented by a panel of women working the S.T.E.M. fields (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math).

Women in Environmental Education or Women in Environmental Firms –  
Check to see who is working the in environmental fields in your area.

Media Literacy and Campaign Advertising –  
This would be a great topic for early fall before the November elections.

Parent to Daughter Summit –  
This was an outgrowth of Sister to Sister Summits and focused on non-curricular issues in workshops and plenary sessions.

Scientific Literacy –  
Quality of Science Education.

All Branch Read –  
*Telling Stories out of Court: Narratives about Women and Workplace Discrimination* edited by Ruth O'Brian who was an AAUW Convention Speaker. This book is available on Amazon, Barnes and Noble.

Fundraising does not technically belong in the programming arena. But as I was checking out websites, I compiled the following list of ideas:

Used book sales, I was overwhelmed to note that one branch raised \$39,245.60 and a couple of others raised over \$15,000.

Used jewelry sales and garage and rummage sales.

Quilt shows.

Book and Author Teas open to the public with admission charged.

Holiday Teas.

Home Tours. Also Garden and Kitchen Tours.

A puppet show.

All of these take a fair amount of work and some take muscle as well, but apparently they are rewarding.

## *Middlebury Branch News*

On November 14, 2009 Middlebury College women kicked off the 2009-10 season at the Sister-to-Sister Summit. This program continues throughout the academic year with monthly events. 23 middle school girls attended and participated in discussions on relationships and body image and enjoyed workshops including Yoga, Zumba, creative writing, drama and cooking. 23 Middlebury College women are mentors to the middle school girls. An additional 40 women from the college community and AAUW members contributed time, talents and food to make the Summit a success.

Once again family and friends of Middlebury members are eagerly purchasing tickets for our annual Christmas Raffle in hopes of winning baked goods, crafts, local products and gift certificates from area business donated by members. Last year the proceeds totaling \$1400 were donated to the Educational Foundation.

Donna Blaise  
Co-President, Middlebury Branch

## *Randolph Branch News*

Randolph Branch member and high school math teacher Virginia (Ginny) Richburg was inducted into the Brandeis University Athletic Hall of Fame on November 1, 2009. Ginny's athletic success was to some degree a result of the passage of Title 9. As her high school in Weymouth Mass took steps to comply with the provisions of the new federal law, coaches spotted her talent.

Ginny says "I owe a lot to a coach named Norm Levine. He spotted me throwing a softball. He came to me and said, 'you've got an arm. Let me teach you how to throw a javelin.'" In high school Levine also introduced her to at least eight other track and field events.

By the time Ginny entered Brandeis University, she was a formidable competitor in the heptathlon; she won the college Silber award for outstanding female athlete in her freshman year. She went on to earn collegiate All-New England honors in the heptathlon and qualified for the track and field NCAA Championships. She graduated in 1981 with a degree in mathematics.

Now Ginny teaches math, coaches several high school teams, and competes in Masters level track and field events. Her favorite is still the javelin throw.

(The Randolph Herald devoted an entire page to Ginny's accomplishments in their October 29 issue. You can read it on line to learn more about Ginny and the benefits of Title 9.)

## *Bennington Branch News*

The mission of AAUW is to "advance equity for women and girls through advocacy, education, and research." Three years ago members of the Bennington Branch made a commitment to assist local women wishing to further their education through scholarships for non-traditional students. Jennifer Kern, Gudrun Hutchins, and Judy Murphy designed the program and have administered it since then.

To be eligible, applicants must be current or former students of the Bridge-to-College Program, the Tutorial Center, or have completed a GED or adult diploma high school credential. They must also be able to demonstrate that they need financial help in order to enter or re-enter the Community College of Vermont, Southern Vermont College, or a technical program at the Southwestern Vermont Career Development Center.

Members of the Bennington Branch provide the funds for this program through two annual fall projects: the Bennington Antique Car Show and an Opening Night at Oldcastle Theatre. For the Car Show weekend and the Thursday set-up members sign up for three or four-hour shifts to work on the Express Lane at the Food Tent. Spouses and friends are welcome to assist in this endeavor. Other non-profit organizations participate in a volunteer capacity for this event as well and, when the final tally is completed, the Bennington Branch receives a percentage of the profit for our local scholarship fund. We typically earn over \$1000.

Our second fund-raiser is a portion of each ticket we sell for the Opening Night of the final show of the season at Oldcastle Theatre. The first \$500 goes to national AAUW fellowships and grants and the remainder to our local scholarship fund. Members also make personal contributions to the local fund.

Scholarships ranging from \$200 to \$500 are awarded to two or three women each semester; recipients may reapply. The recipients tend to be part time students with dependent children or somewhat older women finally reaching for a college degree. They are mentored by a branch member, receive our branch newsletter and are introduced at one of our branch meetings. "You can't imagine how much our help is appreciated by women who are struggling to get that all-important college or technical education," says scholarship committee member Judy Murphy, the coordinator of the recent theater fundraiser.

Mary Feidner  
President, Bennington Branch

## *The Early Vermont AAUW*

(continued from page 1)

National AAUW had been formed in 1881 by a group of women college graduates with the expressed purpose of assisting young women to be better prepared and, in the words of Marion Talbot, one of the founders, of providing “the helpful influence of an unseen but guardian company close around them” when they left college for their chosen occupations.

The early national AAUW decided that it would admit to membership only the graduates of colleges and universities that maintained high academic standards and, equally importantly, encouraged women students and provided adequate facilities for them. As time went on, the prestige of accreditation became so high that AAUW had college presidents begging for admission. Marion Talbot, in her 1931 history of national AAUW noted that one male college president even resorted to tears in the attempt to persuade the woman arbiter from AAUW to accept his institution.

From the very beginning, AAUW followed through on its commitment to aid young women in education by raising money for fellowship funds. The women of Vermont AAUW also made better education of women a priority in their program. But in addition to their support for college women, they established a program that was unique in the organization. In a state in which ninety percent of all elementary schools were one and two room school-houses, they decided to focus their energies on the rural school. The manner in which they accomplished their goals, illustrates how women of their era were able to effect local change and participate in the political process.

It was quite natural that the focus of activism for Vermont AAUW would be on rural education. Many of Vermont’s women college graduates had taken the traditional route for educated women and had become teachers. Others were married to educators. Early semi-annual state AAUW meetings were held in conjunction with the annual State Teachers’ Convention and the Federation of Women’s Clubs. The Vermont AAUW wanted to foster the connections that it had with Vermont educators and with other women’s groups. These connections would be invaluable to them in their drive for better rural schools.

Many of the AAUW women belonged to the Vermont Women Teachers Club (VWTC). This organization had been influential in the 1915 passage of landmark legislation that provided greater state participation in the administration and funding of schools. It had also been responsible for the Legislature’s enactment of a teacher’s retirement fund in 1912. The activism of the

VWTC thus preceded that of the AAUW, and it is likely that some of the early AAUW women were involved in these activities.

Some of Vermont’s prominent women and founding members of Vermont AAUW were already deeply involved in rural education. Among these were YWCA executive Marion Gary, educator Mary Jean Simpson, writer Dorothy Canfield Fisher, and Annadora Baer Tupper, wife of UVM English professor Frederick Tupper.

Dorothy Canfield Fisher had become interested in elementary education when she met Maria Montessori in Rome in 1912. Impressed with Montessori’s theories of education, she decided to bring them to America. Her book, *A Montessori Mother*, helped to popularize the Montessori movement in this country. Her love for rural Vermont led her to direct her attention to the improvement of life and education for its inhabitants.

Fisher met teacher Rose Lucia through their common interest in the Montessori method. In 1921, Fischer was appointed to the State Board of Education. She was responsible for the appointment of Lucia to the position of Superintendent of Rural Schools. That year, Lucia and the Vermont Women Teachers Club inaugurated a program of standardization for Vermont rural schools.

The importance of that program becomes clear upon examining the conditions of schools in Vermont at that time. Because many towns had declined in population over the previous century, they had lost enough of their tax base to make modernization of their schools beyond their resources. Half of all Vermont children received their elementary education in one room schools. Vermont’s rural schools were in great need of repair; many were without basic facilities such as adequate heat and lighting and teachings aids such as maps and a school library.

With the support of the State Board of Education, particularly Commissioner Clarence Dempsey, the standardization program caught on fast in Vermont communities. This was in no small measure due to the rating system, which was based not only on the school building, its facilities and the education and experience of its teacher, but on student achievement and community support. Thus, receiving the “Standard School” or “Superior School” plaque became a status symbol and a point of pride for the town as well as the school.

Powerful people joined in the campaign, undoubtedly influenced by their friends and relatives in Vermont AAUW and the Vermont Women Teachers Club.

Emily Proctor, member of the family that owned Vermont Marble Company, established the yearly Proctor Prize for the most improved school in each county. Her sister-in-law, Mary Proctor, was a charter member of Vermont AAUW and the wife of Governor Redfield Proctor.

The Vermont Board of Education requested an allocation of \$25,000 from the 1923 Legislature for the standardization program. However, the prevailing sentiment at the time was to restrict the role the state played in local schools – the so-called “back to the towns” movement. The session transferred control of school superintendents from the state to the towns and forced the elimination of some state support staff including Lucia’s position of Superintendent of Rural Schools. They also allocated only \$3,000 for standardization, effectively gutting the program.

In 1922, Dorothy Canfield Fisher had threatened to resign from the State School Board to protest the Legislature’s miserly funding allocations for education. During the 1923 legislative session, the entire Board, including Fisher, was forced to resign en masse. Members of the legislature who had spearheaded the bill to transfer school administration back to the towns apparently felt that the Board was lobbying against the bill. Vermont AAUW sent a letter to the governor protesting the passage of the bill. AAUW members decided that the time had come to take action in support of the rural schools.

At the June semi-annual Vermont AAUW meeting of 1924, Marion Gary held a seminar on the situation in the rural schools. Vermont AAUW decided to organize a state-wide campaign to increase the funding for rural school improvement in the next session of the Vermont Legislature. They blanketed the state with 2000 posters during the six months before the 1925 General Session. A series of postcards depicting schools “before” and “after” standardization went to “representative citizens” as Gary put it in her report. They knew who would be most responsive to their cause, gearing their campaign toward those who had an interest in preserving Vermont’s rural character. They spoke at civic clubs and traditional events all over the state. Vermont AAUW members also enlisted the aid of local PTA’s, the Federation of Women’s Clubs and other civic groups. And they had one of their own in the Legislature. Mary Jean Simpson became one of Vermont’s first woman legislators as the representative from Craftsbury in the election of 1924.

Because they brought their campaign to the townspeople, without whose pressure the legislators of

that time would probably have balked at increasing state funding for any local project, they succeeded. In 1925, the Legislature allocated the full \$30,000 that Commissioner Dempsey had requested to the standardization program. In early 1926 Commissioner Dempsey let it be known that over half of the funds were still unused. AAUW members became his sub rosa ambassadors, sending letters to 100 town and district school chairmen. Demand for the funds increased. In 1921, almost no schools met the criteria for a standard school. By 1923, there were 99 standard or superior schools. In 1926, there were 162 standard schools and 80 superior schools.

Eventually Vermont AAUW members realized that the state was placing too much emphasis on the school building and less on the skills of the teacher. The rating system for standard schools, for example, counted the teacher’s skills and experience as only 18 out of 100 points. In 1927 they began to raise funds for summer scholarships for rural teachers and by early 1928 had managed to collect money for six \$200 scholarships.

The Vermont requirements for teacher certification in the 1920’s were quite low. A high school education would allow temporary certification which was renewable after a certain amount of experience. Many teachers had only one or two years of teacher training. Salaries were abysmally low; the average rural teacher made less than \$600 a year in the 1920’s and early 30s. Towns preferred to hire young women as teachers because they could be hired for approximately half of the salary that male teachers required. Understandably, teacher turnover in the one-room schoolhouses was high. The AAUW helped to remedy that by stipulating that fellowship recipients remain teaching in a rural school for at least one year. They were also required to spend two days per month assisting other rural teachers

One may question whether Vermont AAUW members would have better served Vermont education by concentrating on the consolidation of schools rather than by shoring up the already dying one-room school system. The reality at the time was that most rural students walked to school and the poor roads in Vermont would have made it difficult to transport students into larger schools. Not until New Deal funding for road construction reached Vermont, was it feasible to consider seriously the consolidation of rural elementary schools in Vermont. At that time Vermont AAUW members strongly supported the consolidation of schools.

In assessing these women's contribution to Vermont and to the advancement of women in America, one must take into account some seemingly contradictory qualities. They were activists, but worked in the traditional way that nineteenth century women had been activists in campaigns for moral and social causes and the improvement of society. They were probably successful because they worked within the system.

They all knew each other; furthermore, they were all members of Vermont's upper middle class and had the confidence of the members of that class who dominated the political and academic worlds of Vermont. In addition to women like Fisher, Simpson, and UVM professors Sara Holbrook and Bertha Terrill who were leaders in their own right, the Vermont AAUW membership included wives of many of Vermont's politicians and educators.

They used their advantageous positions brilliantly. The Burlington Free Press wrote editorials in their favor (AAUW charter member Mabel Southwick was the daughter of the editor). Fisher used her enormous popularity as a writer to publicize their work. Mrs. Dempsey (wife of the Commissioner of Education, Clarence Dempsey) acted as unofficial liaison between the Department of Education and Vermont AAUW. They solicited donations from their well-to-do friends and the support of leaders of their communities. They

bombarded legislators with information on rural school improvements.

There were no radicals in this group; they came out against the Equal Rights Amendment in the 1930's. In this sense they fit right into the majority of women of the time. The suffragist movement had concentrated on the single issue of voting rights. When the nineteenth amendment passed, some of the leaders of the movement, and men in the political arena, expected that women would organize along the issues of women's equity and form a solid voting bloc. This did not happen. Instead, women remained for the most part in their traditional roles, following the general trend towards conservatism in America in the 1920's.

The members of the early Vermont AAUW were highly intellectual and strongly committed to social action and better education for Vermont's children. They were keenly aware of their unique position as educated women and of the obligations to foster the education of others that accompanied this privilege. In this respect they were probably not that different from today's Vermont AAUW members. However, these women were also pioneers of women's active participation in the political process at all levels in the state. They proved that women could be extremely effective political activists, and in doing so, set the stage for the fuller participation of women in Vermont government and in academia.

***Green Mountain AAUW***  
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***University Women of Vermont***  
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