



North Todd Gentry Papers (C0049)

Collection Number: C0049

Collection Title: North Todd Gentry Papers

Dates: 1837-1947

Creator: Gentry, North Todd, 1866-1944

Abstract: Papers of a Columbia, Missouri, lawyer and amateur local historian. Anecdotes, articles, speeches, and biographical sketches about events, people, and places in Columbia, Boone County, and Missouri. Family papers, correspondence, and some legal and business material.

Collection Size: 4.2 cubic feet
(242 folders)

Language: Collection materials are in English.

Repository: The State Historical Society of Missouri

Restrictions on Access: Collection is open for research. This collection is available at [The State Historical Society of Missouri Research Center-Columbia](https://www.shsmo.org/research-center-columbia). If you would like more information, please contact us at columbia@shsmo.org. Collections may be viewed at any research center.

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Preferred Citation: [Specific item; box number; folder number] *North Todd Gentry Papers* (C0049); The State Historical Society of Missouri Research Center-Columbia [after first mention may be abbreviated to SHSMO-Columbia].

Donor Information: The papers were donated to the University of Missouri by William R. Gentry, Jr. on February 27, 1953 (Accession No. CA3158). An addition was made on December 10, 1957 by the University of Missouri Library (Accession No. CA3332). Another addition was made on April 1, 1960 by William R. Gentry, Jr. (Accession No. CA3431).

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Historical Note:

North Todd Gentry, born in Columbia, Missouri, on March 2, 1866, the son of Thomas Benton and Mary Todd Gentry. He attended the University of Missouri and received a law degree in 1888. His lifetime practice of law in Columbia was periodically interrupted by appointments as Missouri attorney general and Supreme Court justice, district judge, and bankruptcy commissioner. In Columbia he was active in the Boone County Historical Society, the board of education, the Boone County Bar Association, the Kiwanis Club, and the Boone County Hospital Association. He was a Republican, a Mason, and an active member of the Presbyterian Church.

Local history was Gentry's avocation, and he collected a great deal of information on people, places, and events in Columbia and Boone County. He became well-known for his interests and was often asked to give speeches on historical topics.

He married Ulie Belle Denny in 1896, and they had two daughters, Mary and Nadine. North Todd Gentry died in Columbia, at the age of 78, on September 18, 1944.

Arrangement:

The collection has been arranged into the following six series:

- Correspondence
- Family Papers
- Legal Papers
- Local History
- Presbyterian Church
- Printed Material

Scope and Content Note:

The most valuable part of this collection is the **Local History** series, which is arranged alphabetically by subject. All the material in this series was written by Gentry who compiled a great amount of material covering a broad range of subjects. The entries are, for the most part, about everyday occurrences in Columbia and Boone County—the most striking example being the numerous accounts of accidents that befell the people and animals of Columbia. Gentry's arrangement is sometimes odd. For example, while the section on rivers and streams contains some information about a certain river, the section mostly deals with unrelated events whose only connection is that they occurred near that particular river or stream. For many of the events, no date is provided. The biographical sketches are generally about Columbia merchants, businessmen, and university and community leaders, with fewer entries about workers, women, or blacks.

The collection contains a wealth of information for the social historian. The information is often not presented in a systematic or analytical fashion. Taken as a whole, however, it is a valuable, if unusual, collection of local history.

The family, personal, and business correspondence is not complete and does not give a comprehensive picture of Gentry's life. The papers provide little insight into Gentry's activities as attorney general, Missouri Supreme Court justice, or district judge. Likewise, material on his civic and legal activities in Columbia is limited.

The **Printed Material** series contains printed material collected by Gentry. Included are programs, pamphlets, three volumes, and miscellaneous papers.

More complete series descriptions can be found in the container list.

Container List:

Correspondence Series

Correspondence from North Todd Gentry's mother, Mary E. Gentry; grandmother, Mary E. Todd; daughter, Mary Gentry Hannah; and other family members.

Correspondence concerning his law practice while attorney general and a lawsuit against the Alton Railroad Company; the sex questionnaire scandal at the University of Missouri in 1929; the Presbyterian Church; the sale of the Brunswick (Missouri) Presbyterian Church; and the appeal of Walter W. Pippen, Jr. before the Permanent Judicial Committee of the Presbyterian church, which Gentry chaired.

Correspondence concerning local history topics such as post offices in Boone County, plank roads, covered bridges, race tracks, horse racing, county fairs in Sturgeon, the courthouse and county seat of Schuyler County, and cornerstones laid by the Masons.

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- and family tree.
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- f. 41 Denny Family. Newspaper clippings and family reunion, 1936.
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- f. 47 Scrapbook of real estate and legal transactions
- f. 48 Account book
- f. 49 Report cards for Gentry and Ulie Belle Denny
- f. 50 Miscellaneous papers and receipts
- f. 51-53 Photographs. View of the city of Columbia from the University of Missouri to the old courthouse, c. 1885; Academic Hall, c. 1870s; and classmates of North Todd, 1889.
- f. 54 1850-1914. Land deeds, lawsuit and 1852 law about plank roads, election returns (1873), probate proceedings, and case before Missouri Supreme Court.
- f. 55 1921-1933. Estate papers, school board election in Columbia, case before Missouri Supreme Court, and Chicago and Alton Railroad lawsuit.
- f. 56 1935-1938. Will of Mary Garth Gordon, Alton Railroad lawsuit, and suit by Clarence Todd and Joseph V. Hart for workmen's compensation for injuries while working for the University of Missouri.
- f. 57 1938-1940. Todd and Hart workmen's compensation suit.
- f. 58 1940, n.d. Alton Railroad lawsuit and suit with First Presbyterian Church of Columbia.

Legal Papers Series

- f. 59-61 1935-1940. Bankruptcy records while Gentry was conciliation commissioner and referee in bankruptcy in Boone County, Missouri.

Local History Series

- f. 62-63 Accidents, injuries, and fatalities. Fires and persons burned in fires; injuries in machinery; accidents near churches; almost serious accidents; injuries and fatalities caused by falling trees, dirt, structures, lightning, electricity, and wrong medicine; and accidents in water and streams.
- f. 63 Agriculture. "The Model Farm of Missouri and Its Proprietor," 1931 speech about John Woods Harris (1816-1877) and the model farm on Thrall's Prairie northwest of Columbia.
- f. 64 Airplane accidents. Alcohol use. Assault.
- f. 65 Assault. Automobile accidents.
- f. 66 Banks, bankers, banking, and bankruptcy.
- f. 67 Bears—"Boone County's Last Bear Hunt," 1936 speech. Bible—"The Bible and Law," speech. Bicycles, bicycle clubs, and accidents. Black Hawk War, 1832.
- f. 68 Boone County. Places of interest, towns, homes, bridges, mills, roads, churches, railroads, taverns, fairs, and farms.
- f. 69 Boone County. "Deserted Villages of Boone County," 1934 speech.

- f. 70 Boone County. "Firsts of Boone County," 1935 speech; Boone County courthouse and jail; Bourbon, Cedar and Rocky Fork Townships; and "Martin, Nichols, Sappington, and Jones Families," 1933 speech about families in Cedar Township.
- f. 71 Bridges. Accidents on and near bridges and "Covered Bridges of Central Missouri," 1939 speech. William Jennings Bryan and his lecture at the University of Missouri.
- f. 72 Buildings in Columbia. Meeting halls, theaters, opera houses, and Haden Opera House.
- f. 73 Buses—"Omnibuses in Missouri," 1936 speech. Businesses and manufacturers in Boone County.
- f. 74 California gold rush—Boone County residents who went to California. Columbia Cemetery. Charity—"Boone County Friends of the Friendless," speech about caring for the sick, homeless, wayward, New York orphans. Childbirth—births at unusual places. Christian College and J.K. Rogers.
- f. 75 Churches. "Early Churches and Schools of Boone County"; "Bethlehem Baptist Church and Perche Township," 1935 speech; and anecdotes about Baptists.
- f. 76 Churches. "A Brief History of Columbia Christian Church"; First Christian Church; Calvary Episcopal Church; Methodist Episcopal Church; and Mount Zion Methodist Church, 1943 speech.
- f. 77 Churches. First Presbyterian Church, Columbia; "Progress of Presbyterianism," and register of elders, deacons, ministers, and members.
- f. 78-80 Churches. Biographies and anecdotes about Presbyterian Church members in Columbia.
- f. 81 Churches. "Challenge from the Past," 1929 speech on the First Presbyterian Church, Jefferson City, and miscellaneous anecdotes about churches.
- f. 82 Circuses in Columbia.
- f. 83-84 Civil War. Anecdotes and speech titled "Some Incidents of the Civil War in Boone County."
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- f. 85 Coal mining. Columbia Commercial Club. Columbia College, 1933 speech.
- f. 86 "Columbia Female Academy and Lucy Wales," 1933 speech.
- f. 87 County seats—"Some Missouri County Seat Controversies," 1938 articles. Courts—"Some Almost Forgotten Courts of Missouri," article. Criminal law—"Some Defects in Our Criminal Code," 1910 speech.
- f. 88 Dating and social customs. Deer and deer hunting. "Distilleries in Central Missouri," 1935 speech. "Divorce Laws in Missouri," speech. Dogs.
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- f. 95 “The Ferries of Boone County,” speech about laws that regulate ferries and about people licensed to operate ferries. Firearms—accidents, injuries, and fatalities.
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- f. 97-98 Homicides, shootings, and murders in Boone County.
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- f. 102-103 Hospitals. Boone County Hospital and hospital bond issues. Hotels in Columbia and Boone County.
- f. 104 Hunting and hunting accidents. Illiteracy. Jokes and practical jokes. Judges—Anecdotes and “Some Probate Judges I Have Known,” 1940 speech.
- f. 105-106 Judges. “Some Missouri Judges I Have Known,” 1936 speech.
- f. 107 Jumps. People who jumped from bridges, moving trains, wagons and cars, second-story rooms and windows, and burning buildings and swimmers who jumped in water. Juries—“A Model Charge to an Over-Intelligent Jury” and “Gentlemen of the Grand Jury,” articles, n.d., and “Justices of the Peace and Justice Courts of Boone County,” 1941 speech.
- f. 108 Kiwanis Club of Columbia. Law and legislation—“Special Legislative Acts in Missouri,” 1938 speech.
- f. 109 Law enforcement—“Difficulties in Law Enforcement and the Remedy,” speech, n.d. Lawyers—“Anderson-Gillespy-Switzler,” 1926 speech at memorial services for three lawyers: Emmett C. Anderson, James C. Gillespy, and Lewis M. Switzler. Legal cases.
- f. 110-111 Legal cases, trials, actions and defenses. “A Bible Salesman Swindles Farmers,” 1929 article.
- f. 112 Lewis and Clark expedition. Louisiana Purchase. Libraries—Columbia Library and Columbia Library Association. Abraham Lincoln.
- f. 113 Liquor, liquor laws, and lawsuits. “Legal and Illegal Sales of Liquor in Boone County,” 1934 speech.
- f. 114 Livery stables and liverymen.
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- f. 117 Maple sugar making. Marriage and marriage contracts.
- f. 118 Masons in Columbia, “Masonic reminiscences,” speech, n.d.; anecdotes about members of the Masons; and Columbia Lodge No. 16, A.F. and A.M.
- f. 119 William McKinley biography. Medical care. Merchants in Columbia—articles about Dr. Samuel B. Victor, 1931.
- f. 120 Meteorites. Mexican War. Military service, compulsory. Missouri place

- names—"Changes of Names in Missouri," 1939 speech about county names, school, colleges, institutions, and railroads.
- f. 121 Montgomery County—1907 speech about the history of Montgomery County and the history of Missouri. Mules—accidents, injuries, and fatalities.
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- f. 125 Physicians—stories about doctors, medical care, and illnesses. Pigeons. Plank roads.
- f. 126 "Plank Roads in Missouri," 1931 speech.
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- f. 129 Postal service—"Columbia Post Office," 1936 speech about postmasters and Ann Hawkins Gentry, the first woman postmaster in the U.S., and list of post offices in Boone County—when established and when closed. Prairie chickens. Providence, Missouri. Quilting bees.
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- f. 134 "Louisiana and Missouri River Railroad."
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- f. 139 "River Towns of Boone County," about Rocheport, Providence, Wilton, and Claysville.
- f. 140-147 Rivers, streams, creeks, branches, and springs. Anecdotes and stories about the location, place name origins and events occurring along the rivers and streams of Boone County and other counties in Missouri. Included is information about churches and schools, construction of railroads and buildings, people who lived near rivers, picnics, accidents and deaths, robberies and shootings, railroad accidents, Civil War battles, covered bridges, storms and floods, businesses and buildings, and the "Iowa Rain" of August 1875. The anecdotes are arranged alphabetically by name of river or stream.
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- f. 149 Roads. "State Roads in Boone County," speech, "Toll Turnpikes in Missouri," speech, n.d., and speech on gravel roads, n.d.

- f. 150 Robbery. St. Louis Courthouse cornerstone-laying speech, 1928. Santa Fe traders. Schools—log cabin school houses. Sewing machines.
- f. 151 Slavery. “Missouri Laws and Proceedings Concerning Slavery,” speech, n.d.
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- f. 153 “Stage and Hack Lines in Boone County,” 1937 speech, and “The Arrival of the Stage-Coach,” 1938 speech. Steamboat accidents. Storms. Streets in Columbia. Students—“Columbia Presbyterian Student Center,” 1944 article. Suicides.
- f. 154 “Tan Yards of Boone County.” “The Stamp Tax.” Telephone system in Columbia. Tennis. “Tobacco Business in Missouri.” “Townships in Missouri.” Transportation companies. Trees—ornamental cedar trees. Tricks and practical jokes. Turkeys.
- f. 155-156 “The First Graduating Class”; Valedictory in 1843,” Robert Levi Todd and the first graduating class; “University of Missouri: How Established and Why located in Boone County,” 1938 speech; Roll call of the Men and Women Who Secured the Location and the Relocation of the University of Missouri in Boone County,” 1939 speech; and “University Building With Nine Names,” 1937 speech about the School of Education.
- f. 157 “Viles History of University of Missouri.” Gentry points out the errors in Jonas Viles’ *A History of the University of Missouri, 1839-1939* and is critical of Viles’ negative opinions of Dr. Samuel S. Laws, president of the university during the 1880s.
- f. 158-159 Athenaeum Society. “Athenaeum Society,” 1926 speech about the history of the society; *Athenaeum Joker*, the *Missouri Alumnus* and descriptions of pictures of the university, people, and buildings (no title, fragments).
- f. 160 “Washington Statue and Jefferson Monument,” speech at dedication of the law school building, and “President Read’s Great Speech.”
- f. 161 Versailles, Missouri, speech. Samuel B. Victor. War of 1812. Weddings. “Wills of Boone Countians,” 1944 speech. World War I—soldiers in the war.
- f. 162 Wit and humor—humorous anecdotes. YMCA.
- f. 163-166 Miscellaneous. Lists and indexes of speeches and articles.
- f. 167-200 Biographical sketches, anecdotes, obituaries, and articles about people, mostly businessmen, professional men, and civic leaders, who lived in Boone County and Columbia. Information about births, marriages, and deaths may be found in this section, as well as in the preceding section on local history, which is arranged topically. This material was compiled and written by Gentry and is arranged in alphabetical order by name.
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| f. 199-200 | Miscellaneous. Biographical sketches that include more than one name per page. |
- f. 201 Boone County Historical Society, 1929-1931. The material in this folder was removed from a scrapbook kept by the Boone County Historical Society. Included are membership lists, minutes of meetings, newspaper clippings about meetings, and financial records.

Presbyterian Church Series

- f. 202-203 First Presbyterian Church, Columbia. Correspondence, newspaper clippings, brochures and bulletins about officers and members (1871, 1905); church dedication (1894); special services (1910); church newsletter, *The Little Presbyterian* (1920-1922); centennial celebration (1928); and bulletins (1929-1933).
- f. 204 Missouri Presbytery. Meeting (1859), *The Missouri Presbytery, 1817-1937*, the First Presbyterian Church, Brunswick, Missouri (1853), Synod of Missouri, the student center in Columbia (1924), and special finance committee meeting minutes (1936).
- f. 205-206 Presbyterian Church, U.S. Miscellaneous, report from the Presbytery of Central Mississippi, and reports about the appeal of W.W. Pippen.
- f. 207 *Centennial Celebration of the Founding of the First Presbyterian Church*, Columbia (1928). Contains Gentry's speech "One Hundred Years' History of the Columbia Presbyterian Church."
- f. 208-210 Speech by Gentry—"One Hundred Years' History of the Columbia Presbyterian Church" (1928), "How to Hold the Young People in Sunday School (1903), and "The Pulpit from the Standpoint of the Pew" (n.d.) R.L. Todd's address on Sabbath School Celebration (1882) and "The Laymen of the Church," an address by William R. Gentry, 1941.

Printed Material Series

- f. 211-219 High school and college graduation programs, dance programs, programs for special celebrations and dinners of societies and clubs such as the Columbia Commercial Club, Kiwanis Club, and the Young Republicans, yearbooks and programs of the Daughters of the American Revolution, and Knights of Pythias membership card.
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- f. 212 1888-1890
- f. 213 1891-1910
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- f. 219 1940-1947, n.d.
- f. 220-227 Pamphlets
- f. 220 1859-1908. Address by W.M. Leftwich, 1859, at the Missouri Capitol on the anniversary of the Battle of New Orleans; and *The Missouri Oven*, April 1908, a student publication.
- f. 221 1918-1923. Boone County Bar Association constitution and bylaws; biography and funeral bulletin for Milton Robards Conley (1873-1918); dedication of portrait of John Charles Whitten; and Kiwanis Club of Columbia.
- f. 222 1927-1931. Gentry's opinion about the LaClede Gas Light Company and Alexandria-Washington Lodge No. 22.
- f. 223 1931-1933. Biography and funeral bulletin for Minnie Martin Baity (1864-1931); directory of Columbia Public Schools; and history of Bever Creek Church, Henry County, Virginia.
- f. 224 1933-1934. Inauguration of Franc Lewis McCluer, president of Westminster College, Fulton, Missouri, and address by James A. Reed at the World's Fair in Chicago.
- f. 225 1939-1944. "The Church and Higher Education," Westminster College bulletin; centennial convocation of the University of Missouri; Victor Victor, fifty-year Masonic button; Nick Cave, candidate for judge; "Wartime Methods of Voting by Members of the Armed Forces," speech by E.H. Moore; "Order or Anarchy—Which Do You Want?" by Robert Lee Humber; and a Westminster College bulletin.
- f. 226 Undated. Songs of the legal fraternity Phi Delta Phi, University of Missouri Memorial Union Building information bulletin, Philaethean Society bylaws and constitution, and history of the Theta chapter of Kappa Kappa Gamma
- f. 227 Undated. Stock offering of the North Missouri Central Railway company; bulletin of the Gimco Rock Wool House Insulators; the Masonic memorial to Washington; the wills of William Rockhill Nelson, Ida Houston Nelson, and Laura Nelson Kirkwood; and "Your Flag and Mine."
- f. 228-230 Volumes
- f. 228 Columbia Functions, bound volume of pamphlets, 1890-1928. Semicentennial celebration, University of the State of Missouri, 1890; laying of the cornerstone, First Presbyterian church, 1893; Commercial Club banquet, 1911-1913, 1915; Missouri State Board of Agriculture bulletin, September 1911; Founders Day, 1912; "To Our Boys from the Mexican Border," reception, 1917; birthday dinner from Edwin W. Stephens, 1919; State Board of Charities and Correction bulletin, December 1919; birthday dinner for Andrew W. McAlester, 1921; "Boone County Hospital, What It Is, What It Needs, What It Can Be," 1921;

- Kiwanis banquet and charter presentation, 1922; address by E.W. Stephens at the centennial of the First Baptist Church, 1923; Mark Twain Columbia Historical Pageant, 1924; Kiwanis International Missouri-Kansas-Arkansas district convention, 1925; dedication of the George Clinton Swallow memorial monument, Columbia Cemetery, 1928; and “One Hundred Years’ History of the Columbia Presbyterian Church, speech by Gentry, 1928.
- f. 229 *Columbia Functions*, bound volume of pamphlets, 1907-1927. *Missouri Alumni Quarterly*, June 1907, contains speech by Gentry on James S. Rollins; 62nd annual reunion of the Alumni Association, 1914; welcome to Vice-President Thomas R. Marshall, 1915; ground-breaking ceremonies and opening of Boone County Hospital, 1920-1921; Columbia Kiwanis Club, 1923; “The Work of the Attorney General of Missouri,” radio speech by Gentry, 1927; presentation of portraits of James Sidney Rollins and John Hiram Lathrop, 1929; “Privileged Communications,” speech by Gentry, 1930; *The College Farmer*, January 1923, contains article by Gentry on George C. Swallow; *The Missouri Alumnus*, December 1925, contains article on Gentry’s appointment as attorney general; and opinion of Gentry as attorney general of Missouri on the charter of the LaClede Gas Light Company, 1927.
- f. 230 *Columbia: The Coming City of Central Missouri*, 1910. This volume was published by the Columbia Commercial Club in order to promote the city and includes pictures and articles on the University of Missouri, colleges, businesses, buildings, residences, and farms.
- f. 231-242 Miscellaneous
- f. 231 Banks and banking—news clippings about the 75th anniversary of the Exchange National Bank of Columbia. Biographical sketches. Covered bridges.
- f. 232 Civil War—Clippings about a battle near Rocheport. Columbia—Park Hill district map. Confederate states of America \$10 bill. Courts—Missouri Supreme Court controversy and Ernest S. Gantt. Dogs and dog racing.
- f. 233 Elections. Engraved invitation to the inauguration of William McKinley and Theodore Roosevelt, 1901; tickets for the Republican National Convention in Kansas City, 1928; and Howard V. Stephens, Republican candidate for U.S. Senate, 1944.
- f. 234-236 Elections. Material about the contested Missouri gubernatorial election in 1940, Forrest C. Donnell vs. Lawrence C. Donnell. Extracts from court testimony, sample forms for recount of ballots, petition of McDaniel in House Journal (1941), supplement to Senate Journal (1941), and reports of voting irregularities in Boone County (1940).
- f. 237 Escapes from Jail. Fairs. Horses. Frank James. Lawyers. Lost and found—clipping about lost watch. Missouri—“The State of Missouri,” article in *Fortune*, July 1945.

- f. 238 Justice of the peace docket book, Columbia Township, Boone County, W.J. Babb, justice of the peace, 1879-1883.
- f. 239 Poetry. Receipts, 1830-1944. James S. Rollins—bill about his heirs, 1912. *The Students Religious Journal*, 1924. W.E. Stevens chosen as capital commissioner. Levi Todd's house in Kentucky.
- f. 240 Thomas Jefferson See's dissertation, "Die Entwicklung der Doppelstern-Systeme," from Friedrich-Wilhelm University, Berlin, 1893.
- f. 241-242 University of Missouri. Sex questionnaire controversy, 1929; copies of the questionnaires; newspaper clippings about the scandal; and miscellaneous clippings about the university.

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