

Volume 2 • No.1

Stories of the Gold Rush
Fort Langley to Fort George

Gold Rush Trail

JOURNAL

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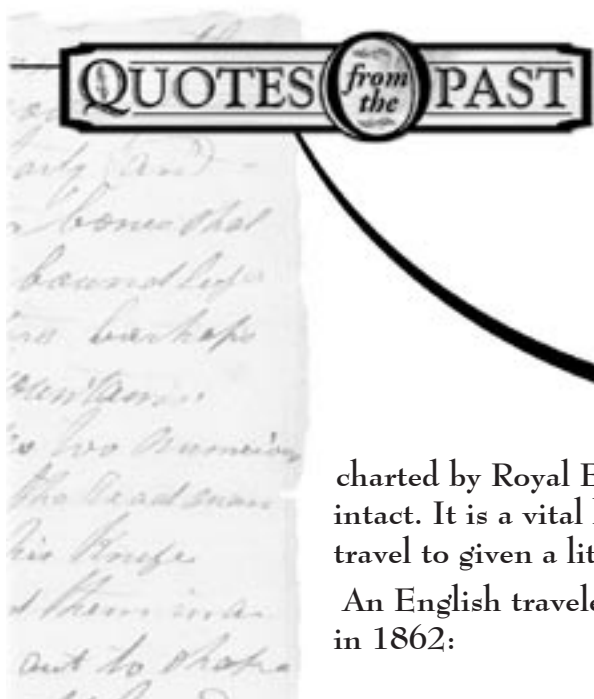


Your Historic Journey Along
"The Road to Riches"

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Richard T. Wright, Diana French, Jason Young,
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Barkerville Historic Town, BC Parks
100 Mile & District Historical Society**
map drawn for The Cariboo Sentinel by Bob Miché



The Cariboo Waggon Road, built under the direction of Governor Douglas, was an engineering marvel carved by hand and horse out of violent canyons and virgin forest, from Yale to the goldfields of Barkerville. It became the backbone of the newborn colony and her construction very nearly broke the back of the colonial treasury.


Today and old ones have grown larger or crumbled away altogether, yet the original route, charted by Royal Engineers and constructed by civilian road crews, remains remarkably intact. It is a vital link to a time only recently faded from our memories; an era you can still travel to given a little imagination and time to explore.

An English traveler and would-be miner, W. Champness described an illustrative scene in 1862:

On our way hither from the ferry we witnessed a curious spectacle. Some men were engaged in blasting the rocks beneath a tremendous precipice, for a continuation of the new waggon route on level ground, instead of the present trail over the lofty mountain, two thousand feet above them. Whilst we were watching the work awhile, we heard a rushing noise and, looking up, saw a large body coming down headlong from the elevated trail. It proved to be a splendid mule, which had made a false step and so fallen headlong. Of course the poor beast was killed instantaneously. A small encampment of Indians nearby immediately came hastening in to secure the tempting prize as a feast. Men and women, with papooses, all clustered around the carcass, which they speedily cut up and carried off in pieces. Their delight found expression in loud cries of "Muck-muck," i. e., something good to eat. They cook the flesh by holding it on a stick over a fire, warm the outside a little, and then greedily devour and gnaw it, as dogs with a bone.

The blasting party engaged here consisted of twenty five or thirty miners, all of whom had been to Cariboo, but had re-turned down country, disappointed. Yet so thoroughly convinced were they of the existence of a large quantity of the precious metal at the diggings, that all were resolved to try their success once more next spring. They declared "the gold is there, sure enough; and we're bound to have some of it before we go home." Several of them had already secured claims at the mines, which they worked on till the rain and frost compelled their abandonment for the season; but they looked forward with confidence to the resumption of operations there. We heartily wished them success, for they were a fine lot of men, true Britons to the core, bold as lions, and almost as hardy and weather-proof as the rocks they were now quarrying.

We had seen a spot where about twelve wretched Indians had been buried by some of the settlers in the neighbourhood. All had been seized with smallpox, and, immediately on the appearance of the disease amongst them, their fellow-countrymen had abandoned them to their inevitable fate. The dread of disease by the Indians far surpasses their fear of violent or sudden death...

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Gold Rush Trail Journal
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 "THE ROAD TO RICHES"

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Bringing
the Trail
to Life

JOHN JESSOP: OVERLANDER ~ ADVENTURER

from "This Hard Land" by Richard Thomas Wright

John Jessop was heading west, submitting to his spring restlessness and the scent of adventure in the wildly circulating reports of the "golden sands and almost fabulous wealth on the banks of the Fraser River." He was 29 years old and for the past four years had taught school in Whitby, Canada West. It was time for a change. If there was no gold out there, there would be something else. And so, as he later wrote in newspaper accounts, "In the early spring of 1859 an

adventurer passed over the partly ballasted Northern Railroad from Toronto to Collingwood, with knapsack, Bowie knife and revolver, and took passage on board a small iron steamer called the Rescue, on her first trip to the head of Lake Superior."

The late 1850s were turbulent times for the colonies destined to become Canada. Newspapers wrote of the west, the fur trade areas of Rupert's land and the new west coast colonies of Vancouver's Island and British Columbia. When gold was found on the Fraser River in 1858, British

Columbia became more than a fur empire. Merchants, politicians and American and British expansionists alike saw the need and desirability of a route linking this rich area with the populated eastern townships. There was talk of a confederation of settlements and colonies. The Pacific outposts suddenly had importance, and to those willing to make the journey and the sacrifices they offered a new life. To a young school teacher the lure was irresistible. John Jessop headed west.

John Jessop was born in Norwich, England, June 29, 1829, and emigrated to Canada with his parents in 1846. They immigrated as ballast, crammed into the holds of timber ships that would otherwise return empty. For the first few years young Jessop worked at lumbering, printing and journalism. In 1853 he enrolled in Ryerson's new Normal School in Toronto, graduating in 1855 with a First Class Certificate. He then taught school in Whitby for four years.

Resigning his position in 1859, Jessop joined the several hundred men who, over the next few years, crossed Canada by land to British Columbia. These men shunned the long, expensive sea voyage and headed west directly, earning the name "Overlander". British Imperialist Jessop went them one better. He tackled the route of fur brigades and solitary plainsmen across the Canadian Shield and the southern plains, avoiding the easier route through St. Paul, Minnesota, to Fort Garry. Jessop chose "...a route on British soil, between the eastern and western colonies of the empire."

Jessop's land journey began prematurely when he and his six companions had to disembark the Rescue on the ice of Lake Superior some distance offshore at Fort William. They purchased provisions for a five-week journey and a North canoe, hired a half-breed guide and an Indian steersman—and then waited three weeks for the ice to break up.

From Fort William they took the Kam-Dog Route over the formidable Hauteur de Terre, the Height of Land, from where streams flowed west into the frontier. Their route, plagued by clouds of black flies and mosquitoes, took them through the heart of what is now Quetico Provincial Park. Midway, provisions ran out and Jessop realized their planning had been optimistic. Then on one of the many fatiguing portages, they found a sack of peas dropped by the fur brigade. "Pea soup," Jessop noted, "was a cuisine that can hardly be recommended as a permanency."

The fur posts of the Shield were also short of provisions, so short, in fact, they were unable to feed the transients. So with only a few fish from an Indian band they paddled on empty stomachs down Rainy River through the intricate Lake of the Woods course into the rapid-filled Winnipeg River. They reached Fort Garry on June 13, after two months of travel, paddling for

28 days, over 49 portages, accompanied by a hunger approaching starvation. Their adventure had just begun.

At this same time "The Fraser River Gold

groups, each choosing a different route. "Turn-back" Nobles returned to St. Paul. This left 20 men spread over thousands of miles of prairie, each trying to find the easiest and fastest route west.

North of the 49th parallel the choice of land routes was limited to two. The newly-born Carlton Trail swung through the Northern Parkland, linking Forts Garry, Ellice, Carlton and Edmonton. was a long route, and the HBC forts offered few provi-

ducks from the potholes, prairie chickens from the grasslands, deer, badger, foxes, an occasional bear and the "vicious looking prairie wolves."

Jessop wrote, "On one occasion two buffaloes were killed about half a mile from camp in...the

"At daylight not an ounce of flesh was to be found, while thoroughly picked bones were scattered over an acre or two of ground."

sions, but it was well traveled and relatively safe.

The alternative was a southern route along the South Saskatchewan and Belly rivers through buffalo country frequented by nomadic Sioux and unpredictable Blackfeet. This was shorter, with buffalo for ready meat, but it was unmarked, untraveled and dangerous.

At Fort Ellice, 240 miles west of Fort Garry, Jessop and Duff met and joined a Nobles expedition splinter group, the Moulton or Bovine party, who in heading for Fort Union on the Missouri River had swung too far north around the Missouri Couteau. The eight men decided on the southern route.

Marching west at 15 to 30 miles a day, they wandered through vast herds of buffalo. "Not a clear day passed without seeing from ten or a dozen to as many thousands or more of these noble animals," Jessop wrote. They walked through a time and wilderness that was never again to be seen. It was an enviable era for adventurers. There was beauty, and there was grandeur, yet often these were lost in the struggle of the moment. Their Sharps rifles provided them with tender heifers, and there were

evening and left with the intention of taking what was needed of them next morning. The dead animals, however, brought hundreds of those prairie scavengers from all points...and the pandemonium thus created can scarcely be imagined. At daylight not an ounce of flesh was to be found, while thoroughly picked bones were scattered over an acre or two of ground."

The consistent meat diet brought on sore gums and lymph glands, the early symptoms of scurvy. Water was scarce and often too alkaline to drink. Rainwater was important for drinking, yet soaked the buffalo chips that provided fuel on the treeless plains. The grass was parched, and huge sweeping fires, often started by natives to drive buffalo or hamper white parties, had scoured vast areas. The horses weakened and died.

Past the Qu'Appelle & Saskatchewan rivers the party lost track of where they were. Was the river they followed the Bow or the Belly? How far to the mountains? Would the remaining stock last? Jessop felt a growing urgency to be further along.

JESSOP CONT. ON PAGE 6



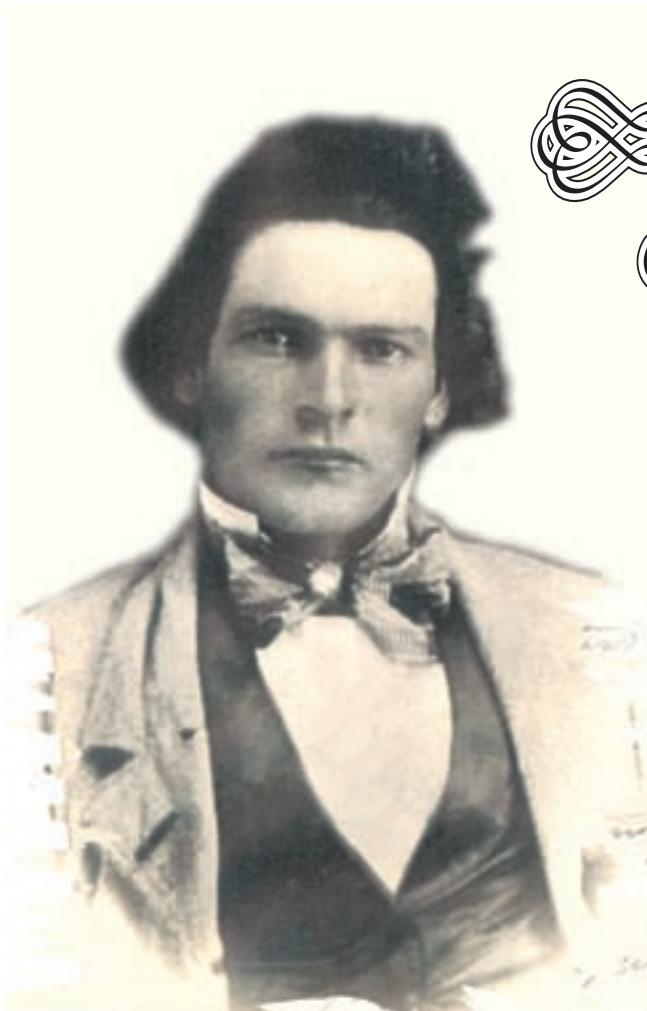
This canoe party on the Canadian Shield is similar to the one Jessop travelled with in 1859

"golden sands and almost fabulous wealth on the banks of the Fraser River."

Hunting and Saskatchewan Exploring Expedition" was underway from St. Paul, Minnesota. The expedition's name suggests its diversity of interests. Under the leadership of Colonel William Nobles its purpose was to locate a route west benefiting the expansionist minded merchants of Minnesota. Their route was to be north through Fort Garry and west onto the plains.

Jessop heard rumors of the Nobles group and planned to join them for protection against Indian attacks, but at Fort Garry his party found that the "...Fraser River seemed infinitely further off than at the mouth of the Kaministiquia." The intimidating expanse of the plains frightened off all but Elijah Duff, a 36-year-old ex British Army officer of Belleville, and John Jessop. When six weeks passed with no sign of Nobles, Jessop and Duff grew impatient. Disregarding trouble with the Sioux and ignoring "...the foolhardiness of this undertaking..." they purchased a well-used Indian pony and a Red River cart and headed west, without a guide, on July 23.

Nobles was indeed late. Plagued with breakdowns, poor planning and weak leadership the expedition fractured into four



The Halpenny Letters

The Gold Rush Trail Journal has come across an incredible set of twelve letters written by Overlander Joseph T. Halpenny between 1862 and 1870. The letters were recently discovered by Sharlene Shipman Baker among the papers of a recently deceased relative. Mrs. Shipman Baker contacted us just prior to publication of the Journal and we are very pleased to have the opportunity to present these excerpts. The length of the letters prohibit full publication in the Journal however, the complete transcripts are available on our website at www.barkerville.com/letters.

Mrs. Shipman Baker has done an admirable job of transcribing the J. T. Halpenny letters which are in some cases nearly completely illegible. We thank her and her family for preserving these rare documents which give an empathetic and sometimes startling look into the life of a young man, who left his home and family far behind in search of the glory and riches of a goldrush.

We present here the first letter written in July of 1862.

In the "Quotes From The Past" series on the following pages you can read excerpts from other letters in the collection.

Edmonton House July 26, 1862 Dear Friends

Another opportunity has arrived by which I can send you a few lines and it is my sincere hope that they may find you enjoying the blessings of health which is one of the greatest blessings. I have never been in better health in my life thanks be to the Father of the wanderer for all his mercies to me. I can say to day his ways are pleasantness and all his paths are peace. Though I am now more than 3000 miles from my native land in the wilds of the Hudson Bay territory a land ... with dangers ... every tribe on earth in time of war amongst 2 tribes the black feet and the Crees yet I am lead home again to the class room amongst Parents and Friends by a sermon from the Rev. Thos. Woosley a Wesleyan Missionary who has spent 7 years teaching the wild and all most untamable Indians. He after service he brought 4 brethren or so to his head room we being the only 5 out of 150 belonging to his church. Though few in number we were nevertheless heartily and kindly received by him and gave us the privilege of occupying his rudely constructed and humble room in which I now occupy a seat while I endeavor to write to those in my one native land.

"(there are) not less than one hundred and fifty dogs at each fort. It is a general thing to assemble together and have a feast on dogs flesh."

He has taken our names to report in the Christian Guardian. He tells us of his travels through the Indians during his 7 years abode amongst them. Dangers seen and unseen, perils by day and night. Dangers which I have not space to pen to you but when I return to my one native land I shall relate to your astonishment. He preaches this evening on the campground.

I will now tell you the form which we adopted to travel ... (we number) about 150, every 2 provided themselves with one ox

"HALPENNY LETTERS" CONTINUED ON PAGE 18

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Edmington
House July 26,
1862

I must cess writing before I burn
the poor Misionary candle to a snuff. I
have gave you a faint glance at what I have
saw for the past three months nor space will not
admit me to go further though I ... would wright
un till morning for while I write I fance I am in
my own native land telling to a tender mother or a
kind Father or a loving sister or some of my youth full
companions to which to be remembered and tell them if
I shall never meet them on earth I shal meet them in the
land of the pure and holey whare the gold shal never rust
and the wearey are at rest

we pased over battle ground recently fought trampled over
the graves allso ... across the disputed ground camped among the
indians I presented a chief my knife which he received and gave me his
in return they are astonished when they see my sword

Joseph T. Halpenny

Jessop

... CONT. FROM PG. 4

On September 15, six weeks out of Fort Ellice with the cold winds of autumn sweeping in, they finally sighted the Rockies. It was a view to last a lifetime. Though they appeared close enough to touch, it took 10 days of wading through numbing streams and crossing hindering ravines to reach the foot-hills. Now the impenetrable wall of rock loomed above them.

Somehow they had expected the pass to be more accessible. But there were no trails or signposts, just the grass behind and the mountains in front. The gold seekers were looking for a way to survive.

They spread out to search for a trail, and one man swam the river they were camped beside and headed for the mountains. Suddenly he was surprised by mounted Blackfeet. Quickly summarizing his party's position—three horses left and winter setting in—he decided not to fight or elude them. Fortunately so, for these Blackfeet were in a friendly mood and offered help.

“This cavalcade of tattered and dilapidated whites, and well-dressed and splendidly mounted and stalwart Blackfeet,”

JESSOP CONT. ON PAGE 13

THE FOUNTAIN OF FOUNTAIN HOUSE AN EARLY WINERY IN LILLOOET

An area known as the Fountain, eight miles northeast of Lillooet, became an important supply centre for miners in 1858. Situated on a high, grassy terrace above the Fraser River, it was named by French Canadians for the natural springs that came bubbling up out of the ground, turning the semi-arid terraces into an oasis of highly productive land.

In view of these natural advantages an Italian, Lorenzo Latora, was the first to pre-empt land in the area, where he started a farm and opened a roadhouse. Latora imported grape cuttings from Italy and sponsored three of his countrymen to establish his vineyard, The grapes made a delicious wine, which was served at the roadhouse. Dried grapes (raisins) were purchased by the miners to take with them on the trail. Latora remained at the Fountain until his death in 1888. His obituary in Victoria's *Colonist* read: "Owner of one of the finest farms in the region, his hospitality was unbounded." The site of Latora's farm is now Native reserve land.

from ~ Golden Nuggets by Branwen Patenaude

Intrigued by the history of Latora's wine, and the Gold Rush Trail, Wally Martin at the Traveller's Hotel in Langley has decided to bring a bit of the past into the present. In a historic celebration, Wally brews wine under the trademark label of Latora. Currently, Latora's Wine is distributed at Domain De Chaberton Brewery; the history of the settlers ambition is explained on the back of the label. visit with Wally and his wife Sharon at the Traveller's and learn more about Lorenzo Latora and the entire Gold Rush Trail.

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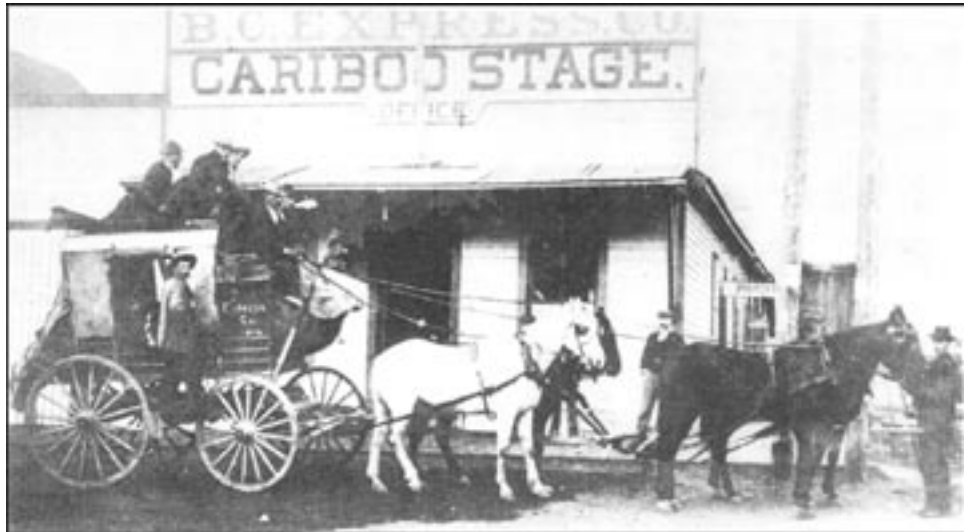
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ASHCROFT

"From above, to begin with God's point of view, Ashcroft looks like a portion of His model railroad. It's a toy town, a cluster of little rectangular buildings and peaked roofed houses set in a little river valley under a perfect sun. All around worn down hills rise up and roll away, looking like they're made of paper maché. The river meanders through the middle of this picture – with railroad tracks on either side running away to the north and the south." (From *Bittersweet Oasis, A History of Ashcroft*, by Brian Belton.)

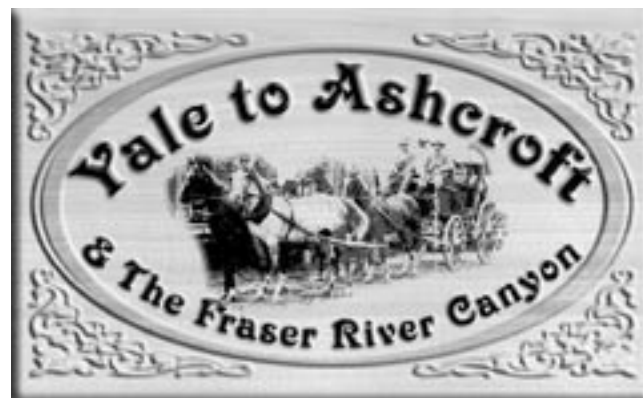


Since the 1860's, Ashcroft has been a key player in the growth of British Columbia. The name comes from the ranch named after the English home of the district's most distinguished citizen, Lieutenant-Governor Clement Cornwall. His home, Ashcroft Manor, still stands on the Trans-Canada Highway above the town.

Although it was the promise of gold that first brought people to what is now Ashcroft, many soon discovered an alternative to actually having to dig to find it – providing services to those who did. Ashcroft became a transportation centre; the home of Barnard's Express, the famous stage line second in size only to Wells Fargo. The "BX" headquarters building still stands on Railway Avenue. The railroad brought goods from the east and the west, and the BX served the Cariboo gold rush.

The railroads, once completed, left behind a thousand Chinese workers who discovered that if you add water to the hot, rich soil around Ashcroft, you can grow almost anything. The area became famous for potato and tomato growing and processing.

From ranching to transportation to farming and then to mining, Ashcroft has a rich history that can be relived in the excellent museum and the "Walk Through Time" heritage park located in the middle of town. Many of the buildings of the gold rush are still being used and can be seen in this delightful little oasis by the Thompson River.



TUK TUK CHIM A TOWN OF MANY NAMES

A mere 10 kilometres south of Cache Creek, nestled in a picturesque valley, is the historic valley of Ashcroft. Originally known as "Tuk Tuk Chim" by local native Indians, the early pioneers in the area called the place "Harpers Mill." After that the town was named "Barnes Station" and "St. Cloud" until 1862 when the Cornwall brothers established the "Ashcroft Ranch" on the site where the historic Ashcroft Manor is located.

The town across the river was first settled by a pair of prospectors, E.W. Brink and J.C. Barnes, who homesteaded 300 acres between them in 1860. The two men cultivated the hay and potatoes that went to supply the farmers and ranchers along the Thompson and Bonaparte Rivers.

In 1884 the Canadian Pacific Railway established a supply depot in the town for freight heading north to the miners. Ashcroft was also called the "gateway to the Cariboo" and was the headquarters of one of the largest stage and freight lines in the province, the B.X. Express.

As the town of Ashcroft grew so did the Chinese community. The settlers in and near Ashcroft relied on the on the merchandise found in the store built and operated by these courageous people. A devastating fire raced through the town of Ashcroft on July 15, 1916, destroying over five blocks. The entire Chinatown area was destroyed by the fire, which is said to have started in the Ashcroft Hotel.

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HISTORIC

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