



The Official Publication of the Montour Trail Council

MONTOUR TRAIL-LETTER

Volume 23 Issue 1

January-February 2012

Bridges of Hendersonville

Construction has slowed for the cold moths of winter, but the abutments at Georgetown Road (bottom left have been completed and the abutments at Morganza Road are nearly complete (bottom right). Photos courtesy of Dennis Sims



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Bike the Friendly Skies by Tim Killmeyer

A month or so ago the Montour Trail Council quietly announced a “soft opening” of the Montour Trail/Airport Connector on the Montour Trail Yahoo Group email list (<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Montour-Trail>).

MTC volunteers have spent October and November of 2011 putting the finishing touches on the “upper” section of the Montour Trail Airport Connector. After a walk-through with the airport officials, it was deemed “O.K.” to allow a soft opening as a trial leading to a major grand opening in early Spring 2012. There are a few minor tweaks to make, but for all intents and purposes, people can now ride all the way to the airport (or from the airport to the trail) using the connector. The purpose of the soft opening is to iron out any kinks before a major announcement is made to the general public. The route to the airport begins at the “5 point” intersection between the Enlow tunnel and Milepost 8. Follow the Bike Route signs. See the map on page 8 or go to: <http://linkup.shaw-weil.com/images/airport-cxn.jpg>

Here are some tips and caveats.

Regarding the “lower” section (old McCaslin Road) heading toward the airport, when you get to the fork in the road there are gates across both forks. You will be taking the left fork, and it will be well marked. There is a path around the gate and you are welcome to continue even if the gate is closed.

From that point on, even if the gate is open - **you cannot drive a vehicle on the road** - bicycles and pedestrians only! That road is for airport employees only. And even then, it is only for employees with business at the fire training center located along the road. Homeland Security is watching.

The posts for the trail rules signs are in place at each end of that road but the signs are still being printed. **Please follow all usual trail rules**, such as **trail open dawn until dusk. Warn before passing** (Sometimes it is hard to hear people coming from behind with the highway on the hill above.) **Stay to the right** (This is important as there “might” be a legitimate motor vehicle using the road to access the fire training facility, as well as the usual county cop or homeland security car keeping an eye on things. It IS airport property!

Visit the Montour Trail Web Site at:

www.montourtrail.org

To Converse, join the Yahoo Group at:

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Montour-Trail/>



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The Prez Sez



This is the year that we take a huge leap forward toward fulfilling the vision of the Montour Trail as it has been conceived since the beginning.

The vision is of an emerald necklace draped around Pittsburgh, heavily bejeweled with places to go, things to see, and friends to meet. Moreover, there's the wonder of doing it all under your own power. And, finally, with direct connections to travel and adventure virtually

everywhere.

Why this year? Clearly, a necklace incontinuous isn't near as good, which is why we're working so hard to close the gaps. Two particularly ugly ones, the road crossings of Georgetown and Morganza in Cecil Township, will this year become a pair of beautiful new trail bridges carrying us safely over those busy roads.

A couple of trail building projects in South Park Township will bring Montour a lot closer this year to stringing some long-open trail sections to the Piney Fork Bridge we built in 2010. A trail ramp and small trailhead at Tripphammer Road is planned to be completed, and much progress is expected in constructing a trail segment along sparkling Piney Fork Creek. Altogether it's a big step towards joining the Great Allegheny Passage trail to our nation's capital and the east coast.

Of course, the necklace was always envisioned with several eye catching pendants. One, the Bethel Branch, now shines considerably brighter with the completion of the J.R. Taylor Memorial Bridge a few months ago. Another, the Westland Branch trail, is being built right now and will be done this year. Its very special luster will be the steely glint of adjacent railroad tracks, as rail and trail together wind southward into Chartiers Township.

But the largest and central adornment of all is the branch trail to the Pittsburgh International Airport. It has been said that the airport connection, in large measure, is sufficient justification for the entire necklace. Certainly the eyes of the world will look towards the Montour Trail in a whole new way, as they fly in bright aluminum planes to explore the most beautiful parts of our region by bicycle. This is the year we really open the door to travelers arriving from and heading out to everywhere. To start this noteworthy year early, we'll host a big opening celebration for Montour's Airport Branch in late March.

A momentous Montour year indeed, 2012. Thank you all for being on board and doing what you can to make it happen.

Ned

Friends' Meetings and Work Parties

MTC Board Meeting:

Every third Monday of the month - 6:00 p.m. at 304 Hickman St., Suite 3, Bridgeville, PA. Turn right off of the Bridgeville exit of I-79. Turn left at the next light, go straight at next light and make left turn onto Hickman St. just after the Post Office. Call Ned at 724-225-9856 for more information or to get on the agenda.

Cecil Friends:

Friends of the Trail meeting, every fourth Wednesday of the month at 7:00 p.m. From May-August, meetings are held at the Kurnick Access area along the trail off Cecil Henderson Road; other months (with the exception of November and December) meet at the MTC Offices. Work and cleanup parties are scheduled as needed. Call 412-496-4308 for more information, or email densimwx@comcast.net

Airport Area Friends:

Friends of the Trail meet every second Wednesday of the month at 7:00 p.m. at the Forest Grove Fire Hall, 2044 Ewings Mill Road, Coraopolis, PA 15108. Anyone from the Airport Area is encouraged to attend. Contact Phyllis McChesney at 412 264-6303 for more information. A "work party" is held the second Saturday of the month and more are scheduled when working on special projects. Please call 412 262-3748 to lend a hand.

Bethel Park Friends:

Friends of the Trail meeting, every first Tuesday of the month at 7:30 p.m. in the Bethel Park Municipal Building Council Chambers. Anyone interested in the Bethel Park Trail segment is encouraged to come. Work and cleanup party, every second and fourth Saturday of the month - 8:30 a.m. Call Bob O'Connell at 412-833-6259 for location and information.

South Hills Friends:

Meeting second Wednesday of the month at 6:30 p.m. at South Park Township Community Room, located behind the Township Building at 2675 Brownsville Road, South Park, 15129. Work and cleanup parties scheduled and advertised as needed. For more information, contact David Oyler at 412-831-9288, davidoyler@verizon.net, or Paul McKeown at 412-835-6692, mckeownp@comcast.net

Fort Cherry Friends:

Friends of the Trail Meeting, second Wednesday of the month at McDonald Borough Building, Council chambers at 7:00 p.m. Work and cleanup parties, scheduled as needed. For more information, contact Ray Johnston at 724-356-2621.

Peters Township Friends:

Friends of the Trail Meeting, first non-holiday Monday of the month at Peters Township Parks and Recreation Center at 7:00 p.m. For more information on work and cleanup parties, please contact Jim Robbins at 724-941-6132, or for monthly meetings, Mark Imgrund at 724-941-6351 or by e-mail at markimgrund@comcast.net.

The Montour Railroad Historical Society:

The newest Friends group. For more information send email to mrhs@montourrr.com.

The Montour Trail

2012 Calendar of Events.

Mark your calendar and save the dates!

Sunday, March 25: Pittsburgh Cycling Expo
Airport Marriot.

Saturday, March 31: Ribbon Cutting for the Airport Connector. Location to be determined.

Sunday, April 22: The 12th Annual Burgh's Pizza and Wings 10K/5K and 2 mile family walk at Cecil Park.

Saturday May 12: Airport Friends Penny Day.

Saturday, May ##: Bethel Park Friends Event

Saturday, June 2: National Trails Day. Cecil Friends Tails for Trails at the Kurnick Trailhead. Other Friends groups may have events in their areas.

Saturday, July 14, tentative ribbon cutting for the Hendersonville Bridges.

Friday, July 27: Peters Friends Twilight Trail Walk

Saturday, September 8: UPMC Urgent Care 1/2 Marathon, 5K and Walk at Robinson Town Mall.

Saturday, September 22: Tour the Montour.

Saturday, October 8- South Hills Penny Day

October: Mon-toberfest to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the Cecil Section.

November- Annual Meeting.

Details for these events will be printed as they get nearer on the calendar. Hope to see you at these events.

Newsletter 2012 Publication Schedule

March-April: - Submissions: March 7, Mailing March 31.

May-June: - Submissions May 7, Mailing May 26

July-August: Submissions July 11, Mailing August 4

September-October: Submissions Sept. 10, Mailing Sept. 29

November-December: Submission Nov. 6, Mailing Dec. 1

Placing labels and wafer seals will take place the Thursday before the Saturday mailing. Everyone is welcome to help. Contact the editor if you would like to help. newsletter@montourtrail.org.

Life on the Board by Tim Killmeyer

When the Montour Trail Council was formed in November of 1989, every little detail of how to organize the group was scrutinized - some people might (with a wink) say "over-scrutinized." As part of the by-laws, which are necessary for any well run organization, especially one with aspirations of attaining 501c3 non-profit status, a board of directors was established. The board would oversee the fundraising, planning, building, and maintaining of the Montour Trail, as well as all the other things that are involved with running a trail - dealing with neighbors, maintenance equipment, government regulations, legal matters, safety concerns, non-trail signs, memorial donations, and on, and on, and on.



As the all-volunteer organization it is, without a paid manager, the board of the Montour Trail Council is a *working* board, there are no "figureheads" or "honorary" members, and to run the day-to-day operations of all of the above it falls to the board of directors to make those decisions. Each director is elected by the members at-large to serve a three year term, with the possibility of a second three year term if they so desire (and are re-elected). No one can serve more than 6 consecutive years on the board. This was done to insure that fresh ideas, vision, and movement was continually brought in and the organization would not become stagnant. It was an honor for me to be among those first directors and served during the first 6 years of the organization, stepping back at the end of my second, three year term to pursue some other interests while still maintaining a hectic volunteer schedule with the trail. Now I am finishing up a second year of another three year term and it is amazing to me how the wheels keep turning with one goal in mind despite such a major turn over in volunteer personnel over the past 22 years.

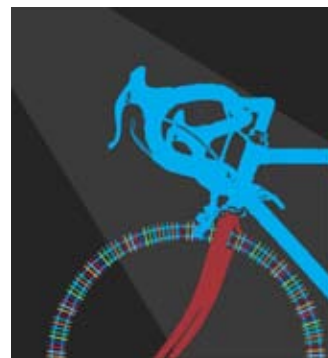
The focus has shifted gradually over the years. In those first halcyon days of the organization, without owning one inch of trail, we focused on organizing ourselves, officers, by-laws, logo, etc., with a heavy emphasis on fundraising, community awareness, government relationships, and building a membership base which would better enable all of the above. Rail-trails were somewhat new to Western Pennsylvania and we had the somewhat difficult task of convincing community groups and government officials that our vision of the Montour Trail was an idea whose time had come and that it was worth supporting in various ways. Helpful to us was the fact that the three mile Peters Township Arrowhead Trail (a part of the Montour Railroad) was already on the ground and being *well* used, and we could point to it as an example of what could happen in every community that the trail passed through. After two years of hard work when the first section of the Montour Trail was dedicated in Cecil Township, the groundswell of support that had been building over time convinced other communities that having a walking and biking trail for their citizens was a perfect way to provide a low-cost recreational facility for them and the doors began to open for us in other communities as well.

Today, while the main focus is still on building and finishing the trail, there is also a greater emphasis on maintaining what is already on the ground (erosion, grass and weed control, better drainage, fixing vandalism,

etc.) as well as providing the amenities (water fountains, benches, links to parks and businesses, better parking, shelters, lighted tunnels) that the majority of trail users ask for. I should add that many of the uncompleted sections left to be built are sections that were either more difficult (because of engineering and design questions) or more expensive (or both!) than the other sections or didn't have the support behind them that is needed to drive the process.

But despite the somewhat different emphasis, there are some things that haven't changed on the board. The membership of the board of directors is always a highly diverse group with people of varying backgrounds and different skills - many of them not necessarily related to trail building. And despite the diversity of backgrounds, they all have the singular focus of building and maintaining the most used recreational facility in Western Pennsylvania. And each member has a say in the decisions that are made. There is a great respect among the members and even what might "seem" to be the most inconsequential questions are treated with deference until every angle of every question has been scrutinized. This assures that when a vote is taken each member feels comfortable in knowing that she or he is voting in the best interest of the trail, its users, and supporters. Of course, these extended discussions of the minutia of each question can make for some long meetings. So pizza has always been a mainstay for meetings that start at 6:00 p.m. and often run past 9:00 p.m.. That's another thing that hasn't changed. But, again, in the long run, that's what makes the Montour Trail the trail it is and a model for many others. Yes, sometimes there are differences of opinion, everyone knows that each person there has only the good of the trail at heart - another constant.

All-in-all, my time on the board has been a very rewarding experience and the Montour Trail Council is one of the best organizations I have ever been associated with. If your love of the trail is drawing you to volunteer, I urge you to contact one of the local Friends of the Trail groups listed elsewhere in this newsletter and become more active. Maybe you'll be sharing pizza with us one of these days!



Pittsburgh Cycling Expo March 25th, 2012

The Montour Trail has partnered with Aerotech Designs of Coraopolis to hold the first Pittsburgh Cycling Expo at the Airport Marriott on Sunday, March 25, 2012. The event will consist of a vendor area highlighting regional trail groups, local charity bike rides and local bike shops. There will also be a luncheon, cycling fashion show, silent auction and trail updates. Mary Shaw and Roy Weil (The Trail Volunteer Fund <http://they-working.org/>) will be speaking about the C&O-GAP, Airport Connector, regional trail updates and volunteerism.

Please sign up for this fun event at www.pghcyclingexpo.com

Fly the Friendly Skies continued from Page 1

Pets must be leashed

Stay on bike route - Unless you have a thing for cavity searches, you might want to pay special attention to this one. Most of the side roads have signs that say No Montour Trail Traffic and you will want to mind those as well. Please remember that we are guests using airport property.

When you get to Clinton Road, remember, that this is a heavily used route to get from Route 30 to I376. We are trying to get a work-around for it, but right now it is the best we have.

Important - when you get to the gate across Clinton Road after crossing over above the highway, the road gate might be open or closed. If it is open, proceed on through. **If it is closed, there is a man gate on its right (next to the Montour Trail/bike route signs). The man gate "might" be closed, but it will not be locked except during periods of high security. Feel free to open the gate (it swings toward the highway) and continue to the airport. You can even leave it open.** Finally, turn right where the sign says to turn right and please do not continue straight past the runway.

Signs for most of the above, as well as mile markers, should be in place by the time you read this. A bike rack has been installed at the entrance to the airport terminal and cyclists are welcome to go inside for lunch. Keep checking the Montour Trail website (www.montourtrail.org) for information on the Grand Opening of the connector on Saturday, March 31.

Southview Construction

Lane Construction has begun working on the new trail alignment between Gilmore Junction and Galati Road. The new trail alignment is required to accommodate the new railroad track that will connect the Wheeling and Lake Erie Railroad to the MarkWest Plant at Westland. These tracks will share the former Westland Branch of the Montour with the trail.

Lane has removed the trail bridge over Southview Road (top right) to accommodate a longer span to improve sight distance and there will be railroad bridge constructed to the south of the Trail bridge. While the bridge is out, a temporary trail has been constructed from Galati Road to just west of the Southview Road bridge. This detour is expected to last into spring.

The detour as you can see, takes you alongside the W&LE tracks above Southview Road (center right). The detour will take you through an active construction area as it drops back down to the trail, so extreme caution is urged (bottom right.)

There is work taking place very close to the trail west of Southview Road, so proceed with caution as drainage improvements are installed there.

Part of the bridge will be saved as a historical monument at what will be a newly constructed Galati Road Access Area.



MONTOUR RAILROAD HISTORY

Over, Under, Around and Through (Bob Ciminel ©2012)

Our last article discussed the McDonald Transfer area where the Montour crossed over the Pennsylvania Railroad Panhandle Division main line on the 962-foot long McDonald Viaduct. There was another Montour/PRR crossing at Milepost 29.5, east of Rowley Station (Trail Milepost 28.5), and this one was a little more complicated than erecting a bridge over the tracks.

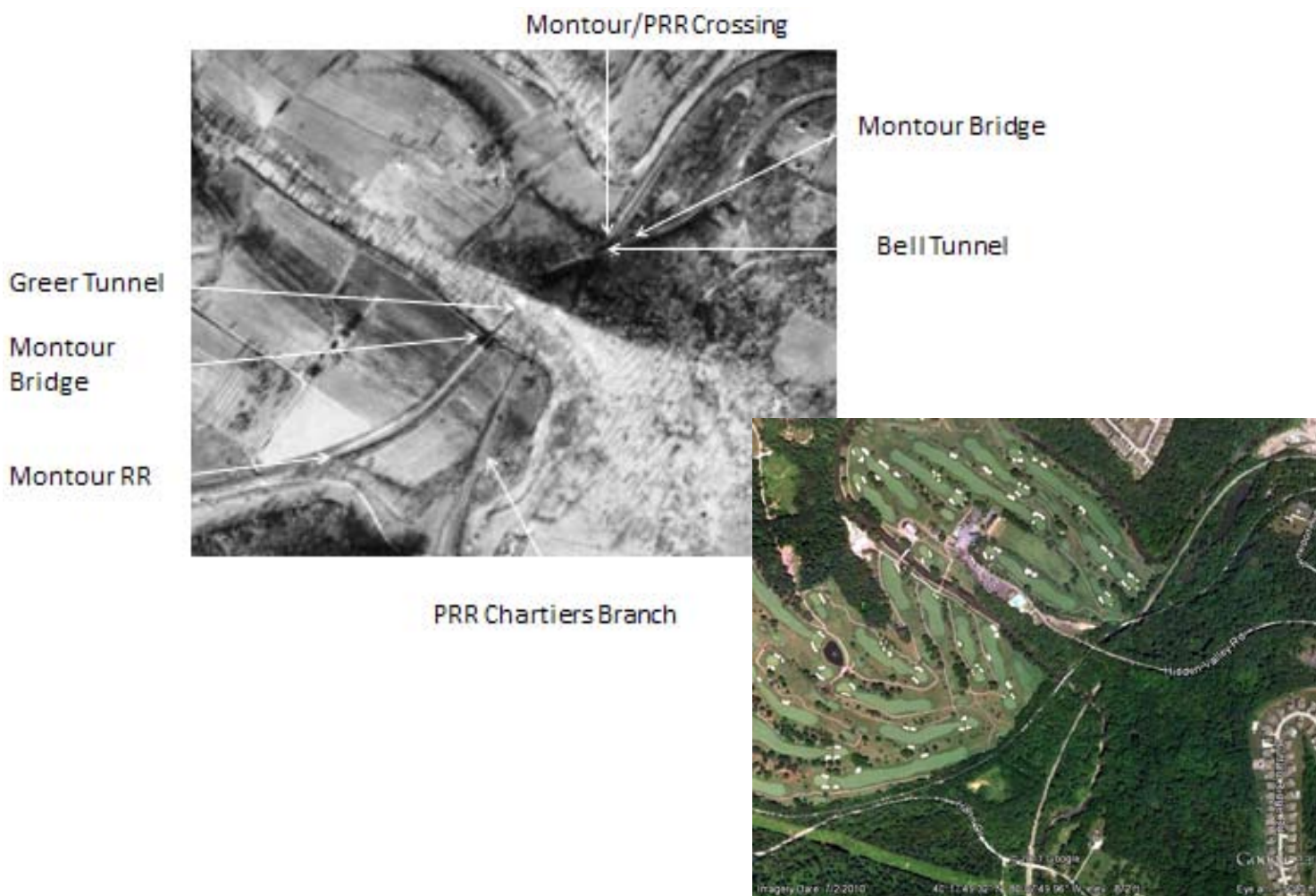
For reasons only known to geologists, Chartiers Creek decided to make a reverse curve where Valleybrook Golf Course is currently located. Evidently the rock at that point was a little too tough for the creek to cut through and the curve was too sharp for a railroad going south along Chartiers Creek to get around it. (The early Montour Railroad faced a similar situation at Jeffreytown Tunnel.)

The first railroad to face the wall of rock south of Greer Pond was the Chartiers Valley Railroad as it built its line from Washington, Pennsylvania to Mansfield (Carnegie) in the early 1800s. The CVR bored the 500-foot long Bell Tunnel through the outcrop and was the only railroad in the area until the Montour built its Mifflin Extension in 1914.

Faced with the same obstruction as the CVR, which by 1914 had been taken over by the PRR and was called the Chartiers Branch, the Montour had to bore the 235-foot Greer Tunnel. The tunnel is also known as Greer Tunnel; however, it is spelled "Greer" on the track diagrams available to the author. There is similar confusion regarding Jeffreytown Tunnel, which is sometimes referred to as Enlow Tunnel. Jeffreytown station was located at the west end of the tunnel, and Enlow station was at the east end, and we suppose the name was based on whichever way one was looking at the tunnel. And to add more confusion, after Conrail was created in 1975, its track diagram for the Chartiers Branch (in 1986 it was called the Canon Industrial Track) referred to the PRR's Bell Tunnel as Greer Tunnel.

Fortunately, the topography allowed the Montour to maintain a descending grade from Hendersonville as it followed McPherson Creek to where it emptied into Chartiers Creek and cross the PRR without any major deviations in elevation. The Montour crossed the creek on three 90-foot spans, entered Greer Tunnel, and then crossed the PRR on another 140-foot bridge, continuing its descent through Kamps Cut to Montour No. 4 Mine.

November 1938 aerial photo courtesy of the Penn Pilot web site. Current image courtesy of Google Earth.



Bob Ciminel is the founder of the Montour Railroad Yahoo group http://finance.groups.yahoo.com/group/montour_rr/ There are currently 295 members from across the country. You are encouraged to join. There is a wealth of information about the Montour Railroad at this location and you can pose questions of its membership, from whom you are sure to get an answer.

Welcome New Members

The Montour Trail Council welcomes these new members and thanks them for their support. We would also like to thank all our members who have recently renewed their membership and to remind all that a growing membership is one of the criteria foundations look for when we apply for grants.

New Members

Diana Froats
Richard Kundman
Marcus Menasce
Tracy Pease
Michael Robinson
Kathleen Wilkes

Richard J. Munsch
Siddharth Pant & Andrea Dimartini
Robert Purdy
Gerald E. Rhine

Leaders

Kenneth Christman
Laura & Gary Graf
Anton Knaus
Vida Komer
Wayne & Cindy Pfrimmer
Tom & Brenda Shields
Valleyview Charitable Foundation
Roy Weil & Mary Shaw

Benefactors

Dick & Annette Bryant
Gay Canough
Gini Chandler
Catherine Eagon
David Hall
Mike Lloyd
Irene & Keith McAllister

In Memory Of : November 2011 – January 12, 2012

Donations received in memory of Vann Weaver made by:

Steve Hohmann
Lisa Chavel
Office of Surface Mining Co-Workers
Henry Austin
Robert Penn

Donation received in memory of George Gerben made by:

Donna & Jerry Green

Montour Trail to be Seen on HGTV



Last spring, HGTV taped an episode of My First Home in the Pittsburgh area. This episode will receive its first airing just about the time you will be receiving this newsletter. It is currently scheduled to have

its premier showing on Tuesday, February 7 at 8:00 p.m. A couple will be discussing their options about buying their first home. They will be shown walking the Montour Trail in the Robinson Township near the gazebo holding these discussion.

I want to help complete the Montour Trail!

I want to join the Montour Trail Council at this level:

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|--|--------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Student/Senior | \$15 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Individual | \$25 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family | \$35 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Supporting | \$50 |
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