



# Bootprints

The Bimonthly Newsletter of the  
Pioneer Valley Hiking Club

President's Corner:

## **PVHC Trail Maintenance and Club Dues**

by President Lori Tisdell

I've got two topics to write about this month – trail maintenance and PVHC dues.

We had a stellar turnout for trail maintenance in April! There were 33 club members who showed up to help with maintenance. It was, probably, the highest turnout we've ever seen. There were a number of projects that Chip Pray and Rob Schechtman, Trail Maintenance co-coordinators, had planned for the day. Among the projects were building a fence to keep cars off a boggy area at the trailhead, clearing the very long fence line from the parking area to where the field on the other side ends, clearing an area for the proposed storage shed, blazing a section of trail on Section 1, and clearing and picking up trash on Section 2. I think that's all the projects.

With so many volunteers, the projects were completed within a morning's time. Although the volunteers on Section 2 had spent more time out on the trail due to having to hike most of that section. Those of us on Section 1 did not have to hike very much to complete the tasks on that section. Afterwards 29 of us gathered at EB's for the traditional wings lunch that the club provides for volunteers.

PVHC has been maintaining The NET in MA, Sections 1 & 2 for more than 20 years. We've completed many projects over the year both small and large, the section 1 boardwalk was a several weeks and 1500 volunteer hour project. We've always been able to count on club members to give of their time to help keep these sections of trail maintained for those hike it.

We have two major trail maintenances a year in April and November along  
*President's Corner continued on page 2*

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May, 2024

### **Inside this issue:**

Important Renew- 16  
al and Member-

Upcoming Events 17  
And The Usuals

Important Notices 17

### **Special points of interest:**

- Lori Tisdell's  
President's Corner  
article on page 1
- PaPa Smurf's  
article on page 4
- Lori Tisdell's  
book review  
on page 9
- Dick Forrest's  
book review  
on page 12
- Future Events  
on page 14



*“Thank you so much, Chip and Rob, for all you do to organize and head up the trail maintenance for PVHC.”*

*~ President Lori Tisdell*

**President’s Corner** continued from page 1

with many others in between to ensure any issues are addressed as soon as possible. Chip and Rob walk and check the trail regularly and lead those in between maintenances, as needed.

Thank you so much, Chip and Rob, for all you do to organize and head up the trail maintenance for PVHC. And thanks to all the volunteers who show up year after year. The trail gives up so much that enhances our lives – it only makes sense to give back when we can.



Now, onto the PVHC dues. We have reduced club dues a couple of times in recent years. During the first years of the pandemic and again last year when we had more monies than we had been used to having...ever! The board decided to return to the original dues in June 2024. I had a couple people ask why we were going back to the original (and still very low) annual dues. We have an increase in expenses this year and want to ensure the club has the funds to cover it all.

Some of the expenses, and increased expenses, this year are as follows.

*President’s Corner continued on page 3*

**President's Corner** *continued from page 2*

The picnic venue cost is \$175 this year – up from \$65. We chose, with the club's approval, to have the picnic at Mill River Recreation Area. The amenities are better than at Mt Tom with a ball field, basketball court, tennis courts, large playing field, two playgrounds, a larger pavilion, indoor bathrooms, no parking fees and close to trails. Also, use of pool for a small fee. The club is paying entirely for the holiday party this year. Our budget is \$3500, \$1000 more than last year. And if there is a larger than usual turnout, we may have to add more to it. The club approved \$1150 for maintenance equipment and supplies last year, of which only a few hundred dollars have been spent. There is a proposed storage shed project on the horizon that PVHC will be funding. And we need more gravel at the trailhead driveway. The club also approved paying for clinics up to \$200. And we are planning a special event meeting in June and will supply food and beverages for all.

Overall, our expenses will be higher this year than in previous years. And again, even with the dues going back to their original fee, they are still much less than most other hiking clubs...and we offer more activities than most of them!

--Lori Tisdell

*"Overall, our expenses will be higher this year than in previous years."*

*~ President Lori  
Tisdell*



*“There are several factors to consider when picking a spot to camp, including....”  
~ PaPa Smurf*

Smurfy advice for the trail...

## **Tent Site Selection**

by John “PaPa Smurf” Klebes

I noticed we have a beginner’s backpacking trip on our upcoming schedule so I thought it might be time to add an occasional article focused on backpacking hints and tricks to the column. Even if you don’t backpack you may find these hints useful when car camping on one of the club’s adventures. There are several factors to consider when picking a spot to camp, including weather exposure, moisture, access to water, safety, micro-climates, and general comfort.

### **1) Finding a Flat Spot**

The perfect camp spot starts with a nice flat area the size of your tent. It sounds so easy but even small bumps, inclines, and obstructions can ruin a good night of sleeping. No matter how flat the ground looks it’s always a good idea to test it.

*The Level Test* - Lay down in the spot you picked and evaluate it for comfort. You can place your ground cloth or tent rain fly flat on the ground like a tarp if you need to. Move around and determine if you can get comfortable. If there is a slight slope make sure your head is uphill and explore for rocks, roots, and spots that will be uncomfortable. If you can’t find a good spot now then it will not be any better at 1 a.m. when it’s too late to do anything about it.

Adjustments – It may be possible to move pine cones, dead twigs and branches, or small stones but, if not, then sometimes a slight shift of position or angle can place the uneven spot away from where you will sleep. Sometimes all it takes is a slight movement to place the rock or root-like obstruction so it’s under the vestibule or at one or the other end of the tent and not underneath where you will sleep.

Sleeping with your head even slightly lower than your body is a nightmare. Some minor adjustments can be made like rotating 180

See *Tent Site Selection continued on page 5*

**Tent Site Selection** *continued from page 4*

degrees to point your head uphill or putting clothing or your pack under your head to raise it up. If you find yourself rolling to the side try wedging some clothing under one side of your sleeping pad to keep you from rolling off your sleeping pad, into the side of the tent, or into your tentmate.

**2) Look Down**

When you first arrive at a potential campsite, look around and think about where water is going to drain if it rains overnight. Even if it's sunny look down for signs of water flow and potential flooding. Imagine if it was raining where water will go and where it might pool up. You don't want to wake up in the middle of the night in a puddle. Moisture will seep through the bottom of even the best tent floors if you are in active water.

Look for signs of water flow like bunched up leaves, dry smooth channels where water has flowed, and dried mud. Sometimes what looks like the best flat spot for your tent is really the low spot where all the water pools. You may want to search out spots that are slightly higher than the surrounding where the ground drains quickest.

If you are not camping in an established campsite area also look out for animal paths. Sometimes the reason a spot looks flat is because it is smack in the middle of an animal trail. Not a good choice as you probably don't want to surprise a large animal running into your tent in the middle of the night.

**3) Look Up**

Be sure to also look up and all around your campsite for standing dead trees or broken branches that are hanging. They call them "widow makers" as they can fall on you with any change in the wind or temperature. It's not unusual for the wind to kick up when a storm front comes through. In winter as the temperature drops, sometimes the dead branches freeze, get brittle, and crack. You don't want

See *Tent Site Selection continued on page 6*



PaPa Smurf

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*~ PaPa Smurf*



**“Sun and Shade -**  
*There’s a lot to con-*  
*sider.”*  
 ~ PaPa Smurf

*“If you camp in a large*  
*open meadow or on a*  
*ridge you may be*  
*leaving yourself*  
*exposed to potential*  
*thunderstorms and*  
*high winds.”*  
 ~ PaPa Smurf

### **Tent Site Selection** *continued from page 5*

anything falling on you in the middle of the night.

#### **4) Sun and Shade**

There’s a lot to consider. Where will the sun hit in the morning? On a cool morning you might love some sun to warm you up and dry off any dew on your tent. But in the heat of summer you might want to sleep in and avoid the bright sun first thing in the morning. Or perhaps you will be spending a lot of time in camp in the afternoon. Would you rather maximize the warm sunshine as long as you can or is your tent going to turn into an oven? Depending on the season you may want to proactively place your tent in the sun or shade. When picking your spot consider where the sun will hit in both the evening and in the morning.

#### **5) Weather Protection**

You may want to camp under or near trees, bushes, or large rocks to block wind and storm exposure. Or orient your tent spot to get shade or sun in the morning to dry off dew. If you camp in a large open meadow or on a ridge you may be



leaving yourself exposed to potential thunderstorms and high winds.

See *Tent Site Selection* continued on page 7

**Tent Site Selection** *continued from page 6*

Pitching a tent in areas with trees and terrain features that are of uniform height provide both protection from high winds and lightning. Avoid putting your tent under the tallest tree in the area as it's more likely to get struck by lightning.

**6) The Dreaded Mosquitoes**

Avoid insect breeding grounds by staying away from waterlogged meadows, stagnant ponds, and wet areas. Sometimes it's best to camp higher, away from wet insect breeding grounds and where potential breezes make it hard for bugs to fly.

**7) Dispersed Camping**

One of my favorite parts of backpacking is camping in undeveloped spots away from the crowds. When choosing an undeveloped campsite you should make yourself aware of any camping regulations and adhere to them, but in their absence a good rule of thumb is always camp at least 200 feet from any trail, water, road, or scenic landmark. You should avoid fragile areas with plant life that can be easily damaged or soil conditions that use can lead to erosion. Try to find firm flat ground.

Low spots such as at the bottom of a valley or canyon can be colder and humid causing frost pockets and condensation to form on your tent overnight. Ridge lines can be windy and exposed with chance of lightning and extreme weather exposure. Usually the best sites are flat areas part way up a slope, avoiding both the bottom of a valley and the top ridge line. That part is warming in cold weather since you avoid any frost pockets down low or wind up high. In hot weather the bottom of the valley can be humid and filled with mosquitoes and the ridge line has concerns of no shelter from the sun or storms. Of course, you could also use these microclimates to your advantage perhaps camping low to get out of the heat or stay high to get into the wind and escape mosquitoes.

Some other good hints are to anticipate sunset. It may take a while to  
*See Tent Site Selection continued on page 8*

*“One of my favorite parts of backpacking is camping in undeveloped spots away from the crowds.”*

*~ PaPa Smurf*



### **Tent Site Selection** *continued from page 7*

find the perfect camp spot and set up camp and it's hard to accomplish that at dusk when it becomes harder to see.



### **8) Police Your Campsite**

The last step when camping is to police your campsite before you leave. Check for any leftover gear or litter. My most overlooked items are clothing, such as a hat or a bandanna left hanging on a branch to dry, a rope clothesline that without anything on it is hard to see, loose tent stakes that blend into the grass, and hiking poles left leaning behind a tree. Make sure to pick up any trash, including those that might have been left by others, to leave your spot even better for the next hiker.

May you enjoy a restful night in the wild. Happy Camping.

--PaPa Smurf

(If you have a suggestion for future topics or a hike-related question you would like covered in this column please send a note to [john.klebes@gmail.com](mailto:john.klebes@gmail.com))

*"May you enjoy a restful night in the wild. Happy Camping."*

*~ PaPa Smurf*



Book Review by Lori Tisdell:

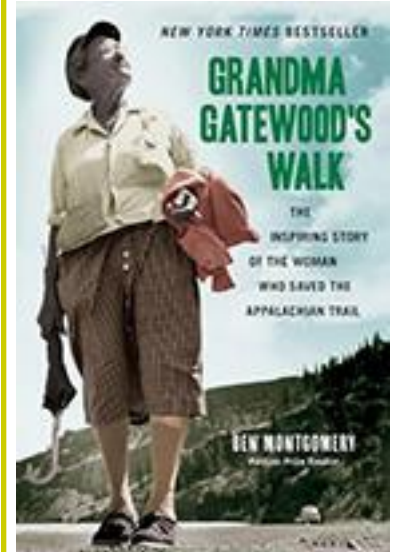
**Grandma Gatewood's Walk: The Inspiring Story of the Woman who Saved the Appalachian Trail**

by Ben Montgomery

I first heard about Emma "Grandma" Gatewood when I became a serious hiker about 14 or 15 years ago. When people I knew were hiking or had hiked the Appalachian Trail. Other than being the first woman to thru-hike the trail and famous for carrying her gear, and I use the term lightly, in a sack over her shoulder, I knew very little about her. I recently became part of a book club, and it was the second book on our list. As it had been on my radar for some time, I thought it was a great choice.

The book does not just detail her Appalachian Trail hike, but also her life and what led to her decision to hike the trail. The author interviewed Gatewood's children, especially helpful was her daughter Lucy who had kept her mother's journals and newspaper clippings. The book moves back and forth through time from her hike to her earlier life. It works though, as you come to understand how she was able to endure the harsh conditions of the trail and her lack of gear in relation to the more than harsh conditions of her life.

Emma and her 14 siblings were raised on the family farm and helped work it when her father turned to a life of drinking and gambling after being disabled in the Civil War. All the child-rearing was left to her mother. Emma left school after the 8<sup>th</sup> grade but read encyclopedias, the Greek classics and taught herself about woodland plants that could be used for medicine or food. At 19 she married Perry Clayton (P.C.) Gatewood. Over the years, they owned and worked several farms moving from Ohio to West Virginia. They had 11 children. But P.C. had a temper and was vicious, within a short time of their marriage, he See *Grandma Gatewood's Walk* continued on page 10



*“Other than being the first woman to thru-hike the trail and famous for carrying her gear, and I use the term lightly, in a sack over her shoulder, I knew very little about her.”*

*~ Lori Tisdell*



***Grandma Gatewood's Walk*** continued from page 9

began beating Emma. Nearly to death more than once. To escape the beatings Emma would run into the woods and stay until it was safe to come home again.

In 1941, after 34 years of marriage, and at a time when divorce was difficult for a woman to obtain, Emma was granted one. And retained custody of her three minor children as well as the family home and received alimony. Her life became more peaceful after that though she continued to work hard. She loved to spend time in the forests around her home, studying plants and foraging.

In the early 1950's Emma read a National Geographic article about the Appalachian Trail. The article stated a person hiking it need only to be in normal good health and have no particular skills. The trail stayed with her and in 1954 she traveled to Baxter SP in Maine to start her hike. This one was not to be. Emma got lost very early on, ran out of food, and broke her glasses. When she found her way, rangers convinced her to end her hike there. But the following year, Emma went back more determined, but this time started at the southern terminus - Mt Oglethorpe in Georgia (the original start of the trail).

Emma became famous as newspapers and magazines heard about her, a 67-year-old grandmother, hiking the trail. She became known as Grandma Gatewood and her celebrity increased the further north she hiked. She received many kindnesses along the way. Seems as though this was the beginning of Trail Magic! Many people shared their homes, porches, barns, and food with her.

But the conditions were not remotely as the National Geographic article had described. Emma often slept out on a bed of leaves as shelters and cabins at the end of each day's hike were uncertain. She would heat flat stones and sleep on them when the nights were cold. Her shelter was a shower curtain, and she carried an umbrella. She was an ultralight hiker before that was even thought of. She wore Keds sneakers and went through 7 pairs during the 146 days of her hike.

See *Grandma Gatewood's Walk* continued on page 11

*"Emma became famous as newspapers and magazines heard about her, a 67-year-old grandmother, hiking the trail."  
~ Lori Tisdell*

***Grandma Gatewood's Walk*** continued from page 10

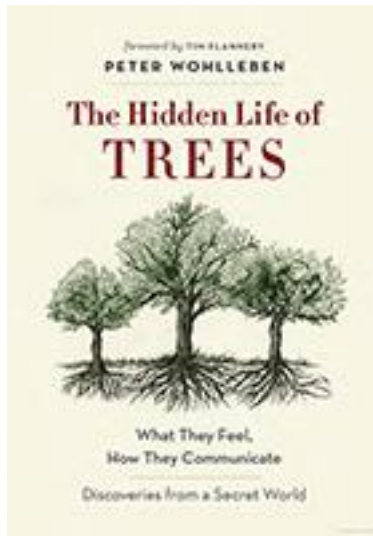
It is a story of fortitude and resolve and grit. She did not allow anything to stop her. Emma's difficult childhood and the harrowing years of her marriage made her strong enough to endure the loneliness and, at times, unforgiving conditions of the trail.

There's much more to her story and the author delves into her life before, during and after her 1955 thru-hike. I highly recommend the book, and not just for people who have or dream of hiking the Appalachian Trail. It is for anyone interested in reading about how Emma "Grandma" Gatewood, at a time when women did not solo hike, blazed a trail for those who followed her.

--Lori Tisdell

*"It is for anyone interested in reading about how Emma "Grandma" Gatewood, at a time when women did not solo hike, blazed a trail for those who followed her."*

*~ Lori Tisdell*



*"Wohlleben is a forest manager who has a keen sense of observation and a deep knowledge of the scientific research related to trees."*

*~ Dick Forrest*

Book Review by Dick Forrest:

## **The Hidden Life of Trees: What They Feel, How They Communicate – Discoveries**

**from a Secret World**  
by Peter Wohlleben

As hikers, at least in the northeastern United States, we are surrounded by trees in the forests where we hike. And it's a joy to walk among them. Yet, we know so little about them. Peter Wohlleben's book, The Hidden Life of Trees, tells the reader about a myriad of things related to trees. Wohlleben is a forest manager who has a keen sense of observation and a deep knowledge of the scientific research related to trees. He is based in Germany and writes about his knowledge gleaned from the Central European woodlands.

I, personally, never knew that trees could feel. And I had a cursory knowledge that they could communicate. It seems that they communicate both above ground and below ground. And different species of trees have different strategies to grow, propagate and thrive. Wohlleben seems to know "the language of trees," which is the title of his second chapter. In his book, there are 36 short chapters, and it's a blessing that the chapters are short because the chapters are packed with information and keen observations.

From my own backyard, I understand some of what Wohlleben is trying to relate. I have a pioneer species of popular trees growing up rapidly in a relatively open space. I also have a tree that was damaged during a storm by another tree falling into it. The trunk was damaged so that the inner part of the tree, the cambium, is exposed. I want the tree to survive – it's about 50 feet tall, probably an oak tree - but fungi and bacteria have gotten into the damaged opening, it's starting to rot, and I'm afraid that the tree won't live long.

Years ago, while hiking in northern New Hampshire, I was in the  
See *The Hidden Life of Trees* continued on page 13

***The Hidden Life of Trees*** continued from page 12

Pliny Range, and as part of the 100 Highest in New England, I had to climb North Weeks Mountain for the list. I was hiking with my brother. There was a severe drought that summer where we hiked. I have never seen the health of a forest so compromised by drought. All of the trees were so dry that they were scary-looking. That was highly unusual, due to the effects of the drought - I had never seen trees so malnourished from lack of water.

Trees are amazing, living, slow-growing organisms. Like us, they grow and die. Many trees live much longer than we do. While hiking, I don't like seeing all of the downed trees of the forest, especially the ones downed across our path. But I understand that the downed trees turn into humus through decay, aided along by all kinds of different organisms/creatures that feed on wood, decompose it, and enrich the soil for living trees. There are many advantages to trees, not just as a commodity to build with and to burn as wood, but it's also psychologically rewarding and healthful to walk among the trees in the forests.

There is so much in this book, [The Hidden Life of Trees](#), that it's overwhelming for a reader like me. Peter Wohlleben covers a multitude of subjects related to trees and does it so knowledgeably and with such ease. Almost a scientific treatise, this book was hard to read and easy to put down and come back to. I wish that I could tell you more of what's in the book, but its wide-ranging knowledge is hard to summarize. Sorry for the cop-out - you'll have to read it for yourself.

--Dick Forrest

*“Peter Wohlleben covers a multitude of subjects related to trees and does it so knowledgeably and with such ease.”*

*~ Dick Forrest*



## Future Events in 2024

**May 24-26** - (NH) 52 WAV weekend – organized by Jim Brown & Dave King

**May 24-26** - (NH) Mizpah Spring (White Mountain) Hut Trip organized by Karen Markham

**June 1** - Quabbin maintenance organized by Jim Brown

**June 21-23** - (NH) White Mountain Sampler organized by Al Goodhind

**June 29-30** - Beginner's Backpack led by Karen Markham and Al Roman

**July 11-17** - (ME) Baxter State Park organized by Lani Giguere - (there is a **waitlist** for this event)

**August 11** - Annual PVHC Picnic organized by Amy Cohen

**August 15-18** - (ME) Mount Blue State Campground in Weld, Maine, organized by Karen Markham & Al Roman

**September 9-12** - (NY) Adirondacks High Peaks Backpacking Trip organized by Lani Giguere

**September 15-22** - (ME) Lily Bay State Park Campground in Greenville, Maine, organized by Karen Markham

**September 26-29** - (NY) Johns Brook Lodge (ADK) organized by Karen Markham - (there is a **waitlist** for this event)

**October 21-25** - (MA) Cape Cod Trip organized by Cheryl Stevens & Debbie Bombard

**December 7** - Annual PVHC Holiday Party organized by Karen Markham, Al Roman, & Lani Giguere

### PVHC 2024-2025 Executive Board



Left to Right: Judy Alfano, Treasurer; Lani Giguere, Secretary; Chip Pray, Vice President; Lori Tisdell, President

## Important Membership Renewal Notices

The following memberships are up for renewal:

### May Renewals

Jill Abrahamsen  
James & Diane Brown  
Terry Camerlin  
Steven & Amy Dane  
Nora Dryjowicz  
Debi Garlick  
David Goldfarb  
Ruth Harper  
Steve Harvester  
Martha Hertel  
Judith Koretz  
Tom Lake  
Phyllis Levenson  
Lisa Martial  
Karen O'Connor  
Michael Reed & Deb Gebo, Leslie Reed  
Elsa Rosenak  
Karen Savoy  
Marna & Michael Shields  
Erin Squires, Peter, & Emily  
Robert & Georgene Trombley  
Janice Webb  
Alison Wondriska  
Celeste Ziemba & John Gorey

Please renew early, and renew by mail. (Make checks payable to Pioneer Valley Hiking Club (PVHC)) Mail your renewal with your name and any address or phone number changes to:

Pioneer Valley Hiking Club  
PO Box 225  
West Springfield, MA 01089  
(Dues are: \$20 individual member, \$35 family, and \$10 for students)

### June Renewals

Judy Alfano  
Bill Burgart  
Barbara Davis  
Robert Duclos  
Gina Geck  
Richard Harrington  
Marie Holmes  
Wendy Katz  
Peter & Beth Ouellette  
Ed Page  
Jim & Peggy Tibbitt  
Ryan Wendell  
Whitney Wilson

## Pioneer Valley Hiking Club Officers

Lori Tisdell, President  
Chip Pray, Vice President  
Judy Alfano, Treasurer  
Lani Giguere, Secretary  
Ray Tibbetts, Founder

## Standing Committee Chairs

Hike Schedule: Jos Brannan & Lori Tisdell  
Backpacking Advisor: Rick Briggs  
Trail Maintenance: Chip Pray & Rob Schechtman  
Club Website Editor: Dick Forrest  
Non-Member E-mail Coordinator: Rob Schechtman  
Club E-mail Coordinator: Lori Tisdell  
Quartermaster: Mike Carrier  
*Bootprints* Newsletter Editor: Dick Forrest

*Bootprints* is a publication of the Pioneer Valley Hiking Club. Please email your story/event contributions to Dick Forrest at: [dforrest@charter.net](mailto:dforrest@charter.net)

## WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

### March

Joseph Holmes & Elizabeth Dyer  
Nancy Hoople  
Devorah Jacobson & Margaret Mastrangelo  
Page Janeff  
Heidi Ostendarp  
Sidd & Sue Purkayastha  
Joyce Samet  
Steve Sussman  
Dave Wells  
Ashley Zimmerman

### April

James Bouchard  
Roy Caso  
Janna Hall  
Christine King  
Patricia Michalski  
Donald (Kent) Rogers





### UPCOMING EVENTS AND THE USUALS

- Mondays Morning hike
- Tuesdays Morning hike, evening hike
- Wednesdays Morning hike
- Thursdays Morning hike
- Fridays Morning hike
- Saturdays Morning hike
- Sundays Morning hike
- May 7 Club Meeting
- June 4 Club Meeting
  
- PVHC <https://teamup.com/ksz8qkbizhndt3qjt7>
- Schedule of Events

## IMPORTANT NOTICES

### Next Club Meetings

May 7, 7 p.m. at **ROC**  
 June 4, 7 p.m. at **ROC**

**ROC - Red Oak Church, 337 Piper Road, West Springfield**

Deadline for submissions to the next *Footprints* is June 20, 2024

**\*\* Check out our club website at:**  
[www.pioneervalleyhikingclub.org](http://www.pioneervalleyhikingclub.org)

Members may join the PVHC Email List by sending a message to:  
[pvhc.hikingclub@gmail.com](mailto:pvhc.hikingclub@gmail.com)



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