

MHC Reconnaissance Survey Town Report

HANOVER

Report Date: 1981

Associated Regional Report: Southeast Massachusetts

Reconnaissance Survey Town Reports, produced for MHC's Statewide Reconnaissance Survey between 1979 and 1987, introduce the historical development of each of the Commonwealth's municipalities. Each report begins with an historic overview, a description of topography, and political boundaries. For the purposes of the survey, the historic period has been subdivided into seven periods: Contact (1500–1620), Plantation (1620–1675), Colonial (1675–1775), Federal (1775–1830), Early Industrial (1830–1870), Late Industrial (1870–1915), and Early Modern (1915–1940/55). Each report concludes with survey observations that evaluate the town's existing historic properties inventory and highlight significant historic buildings, settlement patterns, and present threats to these resources. A bibliography lists key secondary resources.

Town reports are designed for use together with a series of town maps that demarcate settlement patterns, transportation corridors and industrial sites for each historic period. These maps are in the form of color-coded, polyester overlays to the USGS topographic base map for each town on file and available for consultation at MHC. For further information on the organization and preparation of town reports, readers should contact MHC.

Users should keep in mind that these reports are now two decades or more old. The information they contain, including assessments of existing knowledge, planning recommendations, understanding of local development, and bibliographic references all date to the time they were written. In some cases, information on certain topics was not completed. No attempt has been made to update this information.

Electronic text was not available for digital capture, and as a result most of the reports have been scanned as PDF files. While all have been processed with optical character recognition, there will inevitably be some character recognition errors.

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MHC RECONNAISSANCE SURVEY REPORT

Date: June 1, 1981

Community: Hanover

I. TOPOGRAPHY

Hanover is an inland town on the Plymouth Colony line. Drainage via the Drinkwater River in the west and Third Herring Brook on the east to the Indian Head and North Rivers. Swamp and bog land scattered in the town. Topographic relief generally moderate with some dissected hills in the south. Soils generally sandy to gravelly.

II. POLITICAL BOUNDARIES

Hanover was established as a town on June 14, 1727 (o.s.) from parts of Abington and Scituate.

III. HISTORIC OVERVIEW

Hanover is a pastoral cum suburban community in Plymouth County. Although the town was created from parts of Abington and Scituate, the location of primary water sources and transportation routes served to tie the town's development to Scituate and the other North River towns rather than the more highly industrialized Abington and towns of the Narragansett Basin. Traditionally the Third Herring Brook and the North and Indian Head Rivers served as a focus of both native and European settlement. The Drinkwater River in the western portion of the town served as a secondary settlement node. Throughout the latter portion of the 18th and all through the 19th century the town did not possess a cohesive center, rather there were well developed industrial (South Hanover, Four Corners), commercial (Four Corners) and civic/religious (Center) nodes. Nineteenth and early 20th century development followed this pattern of location in specific nodes. The remainder of the town maintained an agricultural emphasis with accompanying linear settlement patterns. Unlike several of the other North River towns (Scituate/Norwell etc.) Hanover possessed a land based communication link with Boston and Plymouth via the Bay Path (Washington/Old Washington streets) which served to unify the eastern portion of the town. It wasn't until the late 19th century that a shift in transportation occurred first with the 1870 Hanover Branch Railroad and later with the 1894 street railway that the town's communication links became more diversified. Light industrialization continued throughout the early 20th century, the town retained an agricultural base. Post World War II highway construction and concomittant suburbanization while enlarging the service sector in the town and introducing non-traditional industrial locations has severely impacted the pastoral nature of the town.

IV. CONTACT PERIOD (1500 - 1620)

A. Transportation Routes:

Important north/south corridor between Accord Pond (Hingham) and North River to Plymouth. Primary trail documented (Barry, 1853 p. 187) as Washington - Old Washington Streets (Route 53) with former loop around Silver Brook to Hanover Four Corners with Elm St. South to

Indian Head (North River) ford at Curtis Crossing and presumed ford over Third Herring Brook east to Scituate. Secondary routes from Accord Pond south as Pleasant St. Along Drinkwater Brook and intermediate trail to Hanover Center as Main Street. Cross route east/west from Drinkwater to Third Herring Brook as Drinkwater Rd. (Rockland St. in part) around Peg and Wampum Swamps. Suspected trail also projected along Indian Head River from Curtis ford to Drinkwater Brook.

B. Settlement Patterns:

No reported contact period sites. One unidentified native site was situated midway between East and Broadway Streets close to the Hanover/Norwell line. Native contact period settlement is likely adjacent to Washington/Old Washington Streets, the North River, Third Herring Brook and in the vicinity of Wampum and Pine Island Swamps, Main and King Streets. The latter four locations were occupied by natives in the 18th and 19th centuries. Two native burial grounds were claimed to be situated at Pine Island and "Rocky Swamp" (Dwellely and Simmons, 1910 p. 51-52).

C. Subsistence Patterns:

Seasonal fishing, hunting, collecting and horticulture. Widespread freshwater streams and rivers probably contained extensive quantities of fish. The North River and the Third Herring Brook were the site of seasonal herring runs. The widespread swamps and marshland were excellent habitats for wild game. The North River provided a direct access route to the coast and its rich resource base. It is highly probable that the natives traded with Europeans while present on the coast. Potential planting grounds were located primarily near Third Herring Brook, between Center and Spring/Broadway Streets and northeastern Hanover.

C. Observations:

The Hanover area was probably occupied by a small-moderate native population. The presence of extensive swamp and marsh land and the absence of large bodies of freshwater likely discouraged the establishment of large native settlement(s). The natives were probably affiliated with the Mattakeesets of the Pembroke Ponds. Regionally, the native population fell under the control of the Massachusetts centered in Neponset.

V. FIRST SETTLEMENT PERIOD (1620 - 1675)

A. Transportation Routes:

Native trails improved as regional highways with main route to Plymouth from Hingham-Boston as Washington Street (Route 53) with Luddens Ford over Indian River (Curtis Crossing) by Winthrop 1632 (WPA, p. 619). Bridges constructed from Hanover Four Corners over North River (1656) as Old Washington Street eliminating Luddens Ford and Third Herring Brook (1660) to Norwell-Scituate.

B. Population:

No figures for the native or white population. Old Scituate (Hanover, Norwell, Scituate) had

Only a small number of these individuals lived in present Hanover.

C. Settlement Patterns:

Limited documentation of native settlement patterns. There was probably minimal change in native settlement due to the small degree of white settlement. A small number of Pembroke Pond natives settled in Hanover in the late 1750's (Bryand, 1912). The first reputed white settler was William Barstow who established a home at Four Corners north of Oakland Avenue in c. 1649 (Dwelley and Simmonds, 1910 p. 172). Additional settlement between 1650 and 1675 established the Four Corners area as a small settlement node. Several homes were erected in the vicinity of Church Hill (west of junction of Union and Pine streets between c. 1660 and the early 1670's).

D. Economic Base:

No documentation of the native economy. Native population probably maintained their basic subsistence rounds. European-Indian trade, however, assumed an increasingly larger role in the native economy with the development of white settlements in and about present Hanover.

The white community focused on agriculture. Farmers lumbered during the winter months. The timber was utilized for house construction, shipbuilding (North River shipyards), household utensils etc.. Limited industrial development. The first Hanover area shipyard was established by William Barstow a short distance below the present North River bridge possibly as early as c. 1660 (Barry, 1853 p. 160). The only documented pre- 1675 mill was a sawmill built near the Ellis Bridge. The dearth of mills was probably due to the settlement's limited development and the presence of adequate facilities in the Norwell area. Bog iron was probably excavated close to the area's waterways and transported to the region's iron operations. William Barstow established a tavern adjacent to the North River Bridge in c. 1657. A second tavern was established by Joseph Barstow in c. 1672.

E. Observations:

A peripheral community with close social, religious and economic ties to the more highly developed northern portion of Old Scituate. The white settlement relied heavily on northern Old Scituate for religious and industrial facilities. The Hanover area lacked a civic/religious commercial center.

VI. COLONIAL PERIOD (1675 - 1775)

A. Transportation Routes:

Major highways intact from 17th century. Location of Hanover meeting house (1728) on Drinkwater Rd. (Rockland St.) created radial roads to town center as Center, Silver and Grove Streets. Other period highways include east/west cross roads as Walnut-Webster Streets to North Hanover, Union-Cedar Streets to Mercer Square and

Broadway from Four Corners to South Hanover. North River Bridge rebuilt (1682) and secondary bridge over Third Herring Brook at Mill Street (c. 1690).

B. Population:

No figures for the native population. A small native population, however, remained in Hanover well into the 19th century. In c. 1727, the white community consisted of 300 residents. The majority of these settlers had moved from present Hingham, Scituate, Norwell, Marshfield and Plymouth. The community had a small Quaker population by the early 18th century. A handful of French Acadians were relocated in Hanover during the late 1750's. By 1765, the settlement's population had increased nearly 400% to 1105 residents. There was no change in the population between 1765 and 1776.

C. Settlement Patterns:

A small native population was scattered about Hanover in the 18th century. The last group of "hostile" natives was routed from their settlement site in the "Drinkwater Swamp" (Barry, 1853 p. 51) probably during King Philip's War.

The extent of damage inflicted on the white settlement during King Philip's War is not well documented. Apparently, the native attackers confined their attack to the area in the vicinity of the Country Way. They fled after failing to destroy Barstow's garrison house. Settlement infill occurred at the Four Corners and extended along Old Washington Street in the late 17th century and early 18th century. A number of these settlers were shipbuilders who operated in the North River shipyards. By the first decade of the 18th century, there was scattered settlement down Broadway and Elm Streets, Washington Street as far as East Street. A handful of homes were built on East Street and in West Hanover. At the time of the town's incorporation, the settlement center had shifted to Hanover Center. The Center was also the site of the first (c. 1728) and second (c. 1765) meetinghouses, town burial ground (c. 1727), training green (c. 1727), and first schoolhouse (c. 1730). Early-mid 18th century settlement radiated out from the town center along Main, Silver, Hanover, Union and Upper Washington Streets. Additional contemporary settlement occurred along Broadway, Curcuit and King Streets, providing the residents immediate access to potential mill sites on the Drinkwater and Indianhead Rivers. Community expansion resulted in the establishment of a moveable school in 1746. The town was divided into four school districts (each district maintaining its own schoolhouse) in 1772. The increasing popularity of the New Light movement in the period 1740 - 1760's resulted in an unsuccessful attempt by some residents of northern Hanover to seek establishment as a parish.

D. Economic Base:

No documentation of native economy. Native population probably pursued limited hunting, fishing and farming. Many probably sought employment with white employers.

Agriculture remained the foundation of the white economy. Industry underwent a post-war boom initiated in the late 17th century and early

18th century. Considerable industrial development occurred on the southern and eastern borders of Hanover. The first documented industrial operation was a gristmill erected by Benjamin Curtis on the Third Herring Brook, probably at the southern end of the Mill Pond in c. 1688. A shipbuilding complex was established on the Indian Head and North Rivers. Several shipyards (i.e., Barstow, Clark, Sylvester, Barstow and Eels) were established between Barstow's Bridge and the junction of the Third Herring Brook and North River in the period 1690 - 1755. Support facilities including an anchor forge (c. 1704) and a forge and finery (c. 1720) were erected a short distance southwest of the Third Herring Brook and North River junction and immediately west of Curtis Crossing, respectively (Dwelle, 1910 p. 206-207, Scituate Historical Society 1961). An additional iron operation was established at the southern end of Forge Pond. A sawmill was built north of the iron works at the junction of Cushing Brook and Pleasant Street prior to 1724. Nathaniel Josselyn erected a fulling mill on the Indian Head River midway between South Hanover and Curtis Crossing in c. 1726. A number of additional grist and saw mills were constructed on the Drinkwater and Indian Head Rivers and the Third Herring Brook. The lumber and bog iron industries likely flourished as a result of the expansion of the iron, mill and shipbuilding industries.

E. Architecture:

Residential: Most of Hanover's Colonial period houses are simply-detailed center-chimney structures with one-and-a-half story Cape-style cottages predominating; two story houses are more rare. While five-bay facades are most common for both houses and cottages, three-bay facades are not unknown, nor three-quarter and half houses and cottages unusual. Clusters of Colonial period houses stand at Four Corners and Hanover Center with individual examples along Elm, Broadway, and King Streets, most period houses having been constructed in the southern half of town along the North River. Only a few more ambitious two-story houses with Georgian entrance treatment are known, while most cottages are very simply detailed. The overall simplicity of Hanover's Colonial houses and the number of cottages reflect the modest character of Hanover's 18th century economy. Also surviving in the town is one house on Broadway dated to the 17th century; a few other houses have early 18th century dates, but most period residences appear to date from the mid-to-late 18th century as suggested by Hanover's comparatively late settlement. One early brick house (1702) survives on King Street; it is unusual for its seven bays and three chimneys, apparently a transitional form combining a center and double chimney plan.

Institutional: Two meetinghouses were built in the period, the first in 1727 (48' x 38' x 19') and the second (62' x 43' x 22'), with a gambrel roof, double porches, and a two-stage steeple with an open belfry and spire, in 1765. The first schools were established after 1730, with the first known school built in 1748 and four schools in operation by the time of the establishment of districting in 1772.

F. Observations:

By the early 18th century, Hanover had established itself as a self-sufficient community with a strong agricultural and industrial foundation.

The tapping of the area's wealth of potential mill power sources and development of the North River as a shipbuilding complex established Hanover as one of the major industrial centers in southeastern Massachusetts during this period. However, the proximity of related industries on the Norwell and Pembroke sides of the Third Herring Brook, North and Indian Head Rivers probably resulted in the development of close commercial ties between these communities.

VII. FEDERAL PERIOD (1775 - 1830)

A. Transporation Routes:

Colonial highways remain in place with primary route to Plymouth as Washington Street (Route 53). Little improvement of local roads and no documented turnpikes.

B. Population (1775 - 1830):

Population remains relatively stable during period. (1105 in 1776 to 1303 in 1830).

C. Settlement (1775 - 1830):

Some expansion of existing industrial villages at Four Corners, South Hanover and Assinnippi. Residential settlement consists primarily of farmsteads along existing roads.

D. Economic Base:

Peak of shipbuilding during Federal period, with 30 ships built on North River 1801. North River Bridge (Washington Street) marked furthest point up river for shipyards, and several yards located in 1300 feet between there and Third Herring Brook downstream. Industries ancillary to shipbuilding included two major anchor forges supplying U.S. Navy. Curtis Forge reputedly the source of anchor for U.S. Constitution.

Key innovation of period, invention of important tack machine by former Brockton and Easton mechanic Jesse Reed, who located in Hanover c. 1810, with works on Indian Head River and Rocky Run. Though Reed later moved to Marshfield, tack machines and tacks produced from 1820s on.

Shoe and boot manufacture, probably begun during Federal period, an important consumer of locally produced shoe nails. By 1837, 60 men and women employed in footwear manufacture.

E. Architecture:

Residential: Many substantial houses and cottages were constructed at Four Corners, Hanover Center, and along Broadway, King and Pleasant Streets. While Cape-style cottages remain the predominant modest house type with both end and center chimney examples constructed, a number of more pretentious hip-roofed two-story houses, most of these with brick end-wall chimneys, were also constructed c. 1810. In addition to

these houses, at least a few hip-roofed Georgian houses, dating c. 1780, remain extant. Double pile Federal houses are more rare. Also more rare are houses with ambitious detailing such as modillioned cornices and elliptical fanlights, most houses of the Federal as well as the Colonial period having simple boxed cornices and door surrounds with entablatures and sidelights to the dado. At least one brick end-wall chimney cape house (1822) is known at 506 Main Street.

Institutional Industrial: Several important institutional structures were built in the period including St. Andrew's Episcopal Church (1811), a two-story Federal building with a projecting pedimented facade, three-bay entrance, and two-stage tower with an open belfry and spire, and the Universalist Church (1830, burned 1893), a Greek Revival structure, two stories tall with a pedimented end gable, elliptical gable fan, three-bay facade and two-stage tower with an octagonal domed cupola. In addition, in 1808 the Hanover Academy was founded with its first building, a two-story structure with a cupola, built then and a second building constructed in 1828. Besides the Academy, three more district schools had been constructed by 1804. Also built in the period is a well-detailed, two-story hip-roofed building with a modillion cornice at Four Corners.

VIII. EARLY INDUSTRIAL PERIOD (1830 - 1870)

A. Transportation Routes:

Highways remain in place from early 19th century. Reconstruction of North River bridge as stone arch span (c. 1830) - apparently still in place as Old Washington Street Railroad originally chartered (1849) from Rockland to Hanover finally completed through West and South Hanover to Four Corners (1870), now abandoned along Indian Head River.

B. Population (1830 - 1870):

Very slow population growth during this period. Foreign born population in 1855, 92.

C. Settlement (1830 - 1870):

Some additional residential settlement at South Hanover and Four Corners, growth remains minimal. Scattered infill along Main Street. Remainder of town agricultural with the exception of small industrial node at West Hanover.

D. Economic Base:

Marked decline in shipbuilding in this period as demand for larger ships outstripped depth of North River. Numerous shipwrights headed to yards in East Boston, Medford, Chelsea, and South Boston in 1840s. By 1853 all Hanover yards had closed (Barry). With ship construction went anchor forges and cupola furnaces. Remaining machine-work activity included construction of tack machines and cotton gins, and, briefly in early '30s, manufacture of iron ploughs by David Prouty, early

instance of use of iron in previously wooden produce. With success of invention, Prouty moved business to Boston in 1833.

Though shoemaking remained active through Early Modern period, peak census year, 1855, when 268 men and women produced over \$233,000 worth of boots and shoes. Three small tanneries active for most of period, and variously, three separate tack factories.

E. Architecture:

Residential: Sidehall Greek Revival cottages began to replace cape-style cottages as the predominant modest house form; often, however, modest as they were, the Greek Revival cottages were well-detailed and substantial. Porches and verandas are rare with simple unsheltered entrances, most often with a broad-friezed entablature, transom, and full-length sidelights, most common. A somewhat more ambitious entrance treatment involved recessing the entrance at one corner to form a small sheltered space before the door. Only two or three Greek Revival cottages are known which include verandas or porticos. More commonly, large center or paired gable-roof dormers were incorporated to add both extra attic room and a more substantial appearance. By the end of the period, the bracketed eaves, panelled cornerboards and console-supported door hoods of the Italianate style were being used on the standard sidehall form; this marks the extent of the Italianate style's impact in a comparatively isolated and conservative area. Only three two-story Italianate houses are known with two more substantial villas also known.

Institutional: In 1861, the present meetinghouse was constructed; it retains the traditional, gable-roofed form of the Federal meetinghouse with a square tower base, octagonal belfry and spire, but incorporates round-arched Romanesque detailing. Also constructed was the Second Congregational Church at Four Corners (1854); alterations were made to the First Baptist Church in 1859. A new Hanover Academy, a two-story structure with a pedimented center entrance and square end cupola, was built in 1851; five district schools were built in 1849, 1853, and 1854. In 1863, the Town House burned and a two-story Greek Revival/Italianate structure accommodating a high school on the second floor was constructed.

IX. LATE INDUSTRIAL PERIOD (1870 - 1915)

A. Transportation Routes:

Railroad and roads in place from mid-19th century. Trolley route constructed from Brockton east/west to Assinippi (Norwell) through North Hanover on Webster-Walnut Streets (1894) with branch to Accord Pond and Hingham on Main Street (1896).

B. Population (1870 - 1915):

Population growth remains very slow. Foreign born total 130 in 1885, 577 in 1915; small influx of Poles and Lithuanians after turn of the century.

C. Settlement (1870 - 1915):

Little new residential settlement, formation of Eastern European colony at West Hanover during the latter portion of the period.

D. Economic Base:

Opening of Hanover Branch Railroad made possible new industries in West Hanover (Lot Phillips Boxmill, 1871) and at old Curtis forge site, Eugene Clapp's new process for grinding and reusing old rubber - said to have been the birthplace of the rubber reclamation industry. In 1913 the E.H. Clapp Rubber Co. incorporated as the Hanover Rubber Co. Both tack and shoe making remained active. Five shoe factories noted in 1875 producing \$142,488 worth of boots and shoes.

Charles Stetson's machine shop on King Street (site of Bates and Holmes Anchor foundry) purchased by George Clark early 1890s with use of forge for manufacture of fire crackers, caps, &c. Some work put out to local families. As National Fireworks Co., plant expanded in early 20th century.

E. Architecture:

Residential: Most late 19th century residential construction occurred in the northern section of town with small numbers of vernacular Queen Anne sidehall houses and cottages constructed along Pleasant, King, Webster and Main Streets. In essence, these late 19th century sidehalls are an extension of the shift to sidehall plans in the Early Industrial period; similar in form and character to the earlier houses, the Late Industrial sidehalls usually incorporate patterned shingles as a textural ornament as well as small porches with turned and jigsaw trim. Several more substantial Shingle Style/Queen Anne houses stand on King Street along with a few stuccoed, hip-roofed Craftsman houses dating from the early 20th century. At least one ambitious Queen Anne house is known with some substantial shingled Colonial Revival houses built c. 1910 on River Street.

Institutional Commercial: In 1893, the Universalist Church at Assinippi was burnt, replaced by the present shingled Queen Anne two-story structure with its offset square tower and pyramidal, dormered spire. Also built was a Catholic chapel, "Our Lady of the Sacred Heart" (1879, J.H. Besarick), a simple, one-story Stick Style building with lancet windows and an open belfry and pyramidal spire at the gable end. In 1880, the last district school (J.W. Beal, architect) was built with other schools constructed in the 1890s after the disestablishment of the district system, including the Eustis School (1896), a Queen Anne/Colonial Revival building, and a Queen Anne/Stick Style school on Pleasant Street. Also built was the Curtis Library (1907, E.Q. Sylvester), a one-story brick Georgian Revival building with a pedimented portico. At least one Queen Anne store, the Brooks Market, is known to survive, on Main Street.

Industrial: Several early 20th century factories stand on Hanover Street at West Hanover and on King Street; the former is a low, shingled building while the buildings on King Street are of brick.

X. EARLY MODERN PERIOD (1915 - 1940)

A. Transportation Routes:

Abandonment of streetcar route to Norwell in 1920s and improvement of regional highways as auto routes with primary north/south connector

as original Route 3 (now Route 53 - Washington Street) with concrete bridge over North River (1930). East/west connector between Brockton and Scituate as Route 123 (Webster-Walnut Streets) and Rockland - Hanover Streets through town center (now Route 139). Small regional airport (Clarks), established in 1920s on Mytle Street, site now housing development.

B. Population (1915 - 1940):

Population growth remains slow throughout period with some minor fluctuations.

C. Settlement (1915 - 1940):

No discernable residential growth.

D. Economic Base:

No new industries established, but all previous period industries remained active for most of period. With destruction of Waterman tack factory 1920, company constructed new plant said to be "one of the best tack factories in the United States ... with hydro-electric power and the most modern scaling and bluing processes" (Stone, 1203). Likewise, the Lot Phillips Box Factory in West Hanover was said by Stone to have been "one of the most modern box mills in the state".

E. Architecture:

Residential: Very little construction took place in the period, most of this consisting of small, modest hip-roofed bungalows in scattered locations along back roads. A few more substantial stuccoed houses were built on King and Webster Streets.

Institutional: The most significant institutional construction took place along Old Washington Street as part of the Cardinal Cushing property: at least a few late brick Mission Revival structures may date from the period.

Commercial: One-story commercial blocks in wood and concrete were constructed at Four Corners with a few potential period structures on Route 53.

XI. SURVEY OBSERVATIONS

Industrial: Existing town survey identified no industrial structures. The oldest surviving may well be the Lot Phillips Box Factory in West Hanover (possibly 1872), now housing a manufacturer of assembled window units. The former National Fireworks plant appears to include a portion of Stetson's machine shop (before 1891) in addition to early 20th century structures. Also surviving is the 1920 Waterman tack factory on the north bank of the Indian Head River. In addition, a number of ten-footers survive in the town -- at least two on King Street. Potential NR district along North River should include shipyard sites together with North River (stone arch) Bridge, 1904, and 1930 Columbia Bridge, single-span, open-spandrel concrete arch. Potential archeological sites include areas

adjacent both to Teague's Bridge (1907) and to stone-arch Luddam's Ford Bridge (1894).

Development Pressures: Intensive development along Route 3 corridor with expansion of activity along Route 53 (Washington St.) from Hanover Mall to Route 139 junction has nearly overwhelmed historic fabric, although Hanover Four Corners retains authentic period village character to a remarkable degree. The remaining areas have gradually been subdivided for modest suburban housing along main roads from Brockton-Boston-South Shore development. South Hanover and Indian River axis remains isolated as period landscape.

XII. SOURCES

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