



The Allentown Neighbor

October/November 2007
Volume 43, Number 3

Published bimonthly by the Allentown Association Inc., 14 Allen St., Buffalo, New York 14202
(716) 881-1024 E-mail: allentown@bfm.org Website: www.allentown.org

“Haunted Allentown,” a full bill of fun events

By Christopher N. Brown

After the Civil War, Victorian-era Buffalonians built large mansions in brick and stone with distinctive architectural features such as deep-set eaves, cupolas, arched windows and carved woodwork that showcased the technology of the Gilded Age and the wealth of their owners. As the decades went by, the proud craftsmanship and ornamentation that was the signature feature of these homes began to wear with age and went out of fashion. By the mid-twentieth century, Victorian mansions became thought of as the quintessential haunted house, thanks in large part to the cartoons of Charles Addams in the *New Yorker* magazine, Shirley Jackson’s 1959 novel *The Haunting of Hill House*, and of course, Alfred Hitchcock’s 1960 movie *Psycho*.

Besides the media’s association of Victorian architecture with haunted houses, there’s good reason why the Victorian era is associated with Halloween. Queen Victoria was in mourning for decades and death was highly romanticized. Some of Allentown’s residents were erecting some of the most elaborate monuments in Forest Lawn cemetery. It was the age of spiritualists and clairvoyants. The parlor, the most formal room to be found in a Victorian home, often performed double duty - besides hosting formal events, it was also used for wakes and funerals. Many of Allentown’s homes still have their original double “casket doors,” so called because they could be opened wide to allow for caskets to be moved in and out of the home. Many of Allentown’s larger mansions were converted to funeral homes after the turn of the twentieth century. Last but certainly not least, several of Allentown’s most beautiful streets were built on top of former cemeteries.

The Allentown Association will be capitalizing on these connections to its Victorian Halloween past by sponsoring its first ever “Haunted Allentown,” Saturday, Oct. 20, featuring many different activities to keep those attending entertained. Working with noted author and paranormal expert Mason Winfield, event participants will be encouraged to welcome the Halloween season with an October visit to Buffalo’s Allentown neighborhood. Allentown’s Victorian-era homes are authentically spooky, with

soaring chimneys, glaring gargoyles, and witch’s hat turrets. The many events will include an event headquarters at the “Haunted” Hamlin House, 432 Franklin St. (between Virginia & Allen Sts.) where wine tasting, warm cider, donuts, live music and more await, including the opportunity to have a reading by some of the area’s top psychics including Cassandra Joan (readings not included in event ticket price).

The event’s big attraction will be its self-guided Haunted Walking Tours. Thirteen sites in Allentown will have guides to tell event participants about each site’s haunted history. Many of the sites will be interior tours, while some will be “porch” tours only.

Paranormal lectures will be held each hour with topics such as “Ghosthunting,” given by the Ghosthunters of Rolling Hills, “Buffalo’s Haunted Architecture,” given by Mason Winfield, and “Halloween and Psychic Communication,” given by Ellen Bourn, president of the Lily Dale Association.

Tickets for entire “Haunted Allentown” event are available now. Tickets are a bargain at only \$10 (pre-sale) or \$13 (day of event, with a \$2 discount for children under 12 or Allentown Association members on the day of the event only). Tickets may be purchased in advance at Positively Main Street 773 Elmwood Ave.; Quaker Bonnet Eatery, 175 Allen St.; Steel Crazy, Allen St. at Elmwood Ave., by mail at the Allentown Association, or online at www.tickets.com or in person at Tickets.com outlets in all Tops Friendly Markets locations (additional convenience fee applies).

On the day of the event, tickets may be purchased at the Hamlin House, 432 Franklin St.

Please turn to next page

Annual Meeting is Oct. 16 in Karpeles North

The Allentown Association will hold its annual meeting Tuesday, Oct. 16, at 7 p.m. in the Karpeles Manuscript Library Museum North Hall, 220 North St. at Elmwood Ave.

Board members will be elected and reports will be presented on the Association’s activities for the past and coming years. Light refreshments will be provided. Members are advised to walk to the meeting if possible, because parking is scarce.

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Applications ready to mitigate gas meters

The Allentown Association is receiving applications for grants to minimize the intrusive appearance of gas meters installed between the façade and the curb of properties in historic preservation districts.

If a gas meter has been installed on your property, between the façade and the curb, you may qualify for a maximum grant of \$200 for a single-family house or \$400 for a two-to-four residence structure with multiple gas meters. A matching grant is available for income-producing properties not owner-occupied, with an allocation of \$50 per meter and a maximum of \$500.

Application forms may be obtained by contacting the Allentown Association at 14 Allen St., Buffalo 14202, email address allentown@bfm.org, or telephoning (716) 881-1024.

The grants will be made from a \$25,000 contribution from the National Fuel Gas Co. Foundation and must be used to mitigate the intrusion of gas meters in front of structures by such methods as painting the meters to blend in with the structure, by screening with evergreen shrubbery, or by other means to camouflage the intrusive equipment.

The grants are available to owners of property in any historic preservation district in Buffalo, not just Allentown. The Allentown Association is administering the program under an agreement with National Fuel.

National Fuel is replacing century-old, low-pressure gas lines with medium-pressure lines and maintains that safety considerations require meters to be moved from basements to the exterior. Outside meters are being installed on the sides of houses in cases where the company finds the side location suitable. But the meter must be placed in front if houses are hemmed in by

neighboring structures or driveways which make it unsafe to locate a meter on the side, the gas company insists. The grants are available only for properties where meters are placed in front of a structure, or in case of a corner building, on the side between the structure and the curb.

National Fuel has installed new meters at 643 buildings in preservation districts since 2000, and 246 of these were installed in the front of buildings. New outside meters are needed for 1,546 houses in preservation districts and about 50 will be installed in the next year or so, the company says.

Homeowners may choose between two types of grants:

— Do-it-yourself Reimbursable Grant. You do all the work yourself and submit receipts and a photograph of the completed work. This option allows you to obtain the maximum amount of materials for the beautification project and allows you to obtain materials from the source of your choice.

— Urban Roots Landscaping Service Grant. The Allentown Association is partnering with Urban Roots Community Garden Center, 428 Rhode Island St., (716-362-8982 urbanroots.org), Urban Roots will work with you to choose plants that will work well in your situation. They will install the plants for you at a flat rate that must be included in your application.

Applicants must adhere to technical guidelines set by National Fuel which ensure access to the meters. The guidelines are post on the website www.allentown.org.

Enter the Spookiest House Contest Oct. 20, continued from front page

The Allentown Association will also be creating a beautiful booklet called *The Streets of Allentown* that will give a brief description of every street in the Allentown Historic District and some of the notable historic and architecturally significant homes found on each street. Included will also be loads of color photographs celebrating Allentown's exceptional architecture. The booklets will be used during one of two guided walking tours given during the event. The first, at 2 p.m. will be a stroll along picturesque Irving Place and Park St. where tour participants will see some of Allentown's most interesting streets and discover which homes on Irving Place were built on top of a former cemetery! At 5 p.m., a second guided walking tour will be given that will highlight the Symphony Circle and Days Park sections of Allentown. Tour participants will explore the western edge of Allentown with its historic pocket parks filled with trees in their full autumn splendor and learn about the location of the Old Black Rock Village cemetery, where some bodies remain to this day!

If all this is not enough, there is more! Ed Hogel will be hosting the "Steel Crazy" Haunted Courtyard on Allen Street at Elmwood Avenue. The Allentown Association is also working with Allentown merchants to allow tour participants to have free or discounted access to other Allentown attractions including restaurants and retail stores.

The Allentown Association is encouraging the entire Allentown neighborhood to get in the "spirit" by sponsoring Allentown's Spookiest House Contest. Allentowners are being asked to decorate their house for Halloween and make it look as spooky as they can! Houses will be judged by the Association's beautification committee and winners announced on Oct. 20 at 4:30 p.m. in the Hamlin House, 432 Franklin St., but a resident must submit an application to be considered. Prizes are: first prize, \$150; second prize, \$75; and third prize, \$50. There is no cost to enter; applications are available on the Association's website at www.allentown.org or by calling the Association's offices at (716) 881-1024.

For those who would like to volunteer to help with the event, the Association needs people to help distribute promotional posters, decorate the Hamlin House, work at the Hamlin House during the event and work as tour guides. If you are interested in volunteering, please call the Association's offices at 881-1024 or send an email to allentown@bfm.org.

The Allentown Association believes this will be a fun and unique event that will help to showcase Allentown in a way that's never been done before as well as raising much-needed funds for the Association's continuing operations.



More than 40 Allentowners took a tour of highlights of the city's architectural heritage on Sept. 5 in an open-air bus operated by the Campaign for Greater Buffalo. Gretchan Grobe, standing, left, a former Allentown Association president, arranged the tour. Photo by Pete Carroll.

Wadsworth St. plans on hold, new commissioner says

By *Daniel Culross*

The Wadsworth St. improvement project, which seeks to improve the aesthetics of the public right of way of Wadsworth St. from Symphony Circle south to Allen St., has been in the design and discussion stages for over a year and a half.

Now encountering the *third* new city commissioner of public works since the project was first crafted by concerned business owners and residents of the immediate vicinity, the project is still alive. As of Sept. 21, after several phone messages and one in-person meeting between myself and new Public Works Commissioner Steve Stepniak, it appears there isn't a clear timetable yet for when the improvements will begin.

Commissioner Stepniak, who has been in office for only a few weeks, would neither confirm nor deny the project getting funding or ever leaving the design stages. The project, which would renovate the entire public right of way, includes new signage, street re-surfacing, new curb and gutters, sidewalks, historically correct pedestrian scaled lighting and street "furniture,"

traffic calming devices, as well as trees and associated landscaping improvements.

To his defense, Stepniak has inherited a myriad of other projects already "in the pipeline," and he has to finish up the city's tree-planting efforts started by previous commissioners. He has been informed of both the momentum currently created in the neighborhood from millions of dollars in private investments, and the importance of the corridor as a gateway into the Allentown Historic District. Commissioner Stepniak will be providing an update after an interdepartmental meeting.

Ellicott District Council member Brian C. Davis has supported the project orally, but no written statements, financial, or physical evidence of the project's start could be seen. "Some of the City's highest priority projects involve some sort of outside federal funding, making the chances of the Wadsworth St. project happening this year less than favorable," said Commissioner Stepniak, adding, "that's not to say it can't get started this year." As the new Commissioner gets more up to speed with the project, another update will follow soon.

Daniel Culross is an Allentown resident and chairman of the Allentown Association's Wadsworth St. Committee.



City urged to save Main St. façade before collapse

The Bosche Building at 918-920 Main St. is abandoned and about to collapse.

The Allentown Association and the city Preservation Board are trying to get the city, which owns the building, to save the façade.

The building is a major component of the block on Main St.'s west side between Allen and Virginia Sts. At the eastern edge of Allentown bordering the new, expanding Buffalo-Niagara Medical Campus.

A major collapse of the roof and interior occurred in August and work must be done before winter if the façade is to be saved.

Another problem is the adjacent building at 916, which shares a wall with 918.

The block is one of the last remaining intact 19th-century blocks of three-to-four-story contiguous buildings that display what much of downtown Buffalo looked like in the mid-to-late 1800s. The recent preservation and expansion of the Granite Works has done much to enhance the block's streetscape.

The Bosche Brothers Carriage Co. began about 1883 and moved its offices and display rooms to this location in 1891, with its factory remaining at 168-170 Ellicott St. For a time the company produced automobile bodies for the Thomas Motor Co. A 1907 Thomas Flyer built in Buffalo won an around-thee-world race in 1908. Thomas closed in 1912 and Bosche closed in 1914.

In a development in the same block, Zeptomatrix has received Preservation Board permission to replace a tree with handicapped parking space in the rear of its property at 872-878 Main St.

In other preservations news:

—543 Franklin St., perhaps the finest example of Greek Revival architecture in Buffalo has been purchased and is being



The Bosche Building, right, and 916 Main St., left. Photo by Anthony Armstrong.

renovated by James Lombardo of New York City. He is seeking Preservation Board permission for window replacements. This is the first building erected on the site after the razing of the Poinsett Barracks and the extension of Franklin St.

—The Preservation Board permitted installation of a second-floor porch at 164 Edward St. The owner, Miroslaw Chmiola, said he is renovating the colonial-revival house and the porch would make the second-floor apartment easier to rent. The house is next to 172 Edward St., once the residence of Frances Folsom, who married President Grover Cleveland in the White House.

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Young artists, entrepreneurs open at 224 Allen

A group of young artists and entrepreneurs is setting up shop at 224 Allen St. offering goods and services spanning a range including yoga instruction, whole foods, apparel and oil paintings.

Sharing space in the double storefront between Mariner and College Sts., are these members of the collaborative:

— **Space@224**, an art gallery and studio operated by Jennifer Rodriguez.

— **Infin8BodyWorks, Inc.**, offering whole and health foods, health and nutrition counseling, meditation and a juice bar. It is operated by Felicia Parker (983-7390) and Melis Goff (870-8258), a nurse and licensed massage therapist. Yoga classes are given by Jennifer Russo.

“Infin8BodyWorks is an education-based community resource organization specializing in self-healing through dietary and therapeutic lifestyle modifications. Our team of experienced health

and wellness practitioners will assist you as we explore the body, mind, spirit connection through the art of self-care,” their brochure states.

— **M’Original Designs**, operated by Maura Price, featuring women’s fashions and costumes, alterations and textile art (444-1455, moriginal14201@yahoo.com).

On the second floor, Jose R. Rodriguez, Jennifer’s husband, operates **JRVisuals**, a multimedia design and digital studio, 884-1000, jr@jrvisuals.

Hours were still being worked out when we visited the premises, pending completion of carpentry and electrical work. But plans call for Space@224 and M’Original Designs to be open a minimum of Thursday, Friday and Saturday evenings, or by appointment, Jennifer Rodriguez said.

Lagniappes — a little something extra

By Matthew Ryan

“Hello, I have a board meeting with 10-15 people in 30 minutes. Can you put some food together?” It was 6:30 p.m. on a Tuesday evening and these were my first words to **Lagniappes** owner Chris Silverstein. His surprising reply, with a smile: “Give me 20 minutes.”

Allentown’s newest food stop at 244 Allen St. is physically just more than a pick up window, but the menu provides big variety and taste. This is “New Orleans cuisine,” as described by proprietors Chris and Don. My favorites were the meatloaf po-boy and the fried okra. They also feature award-winning gumbo. Looking over the menu I know I’m also going to be trying the roasted red pepper po-boy very soon.

If you do choose to eat in, there are several tables and waitress Rachel is happy to serve you. Open for lunch Tuesday to Friday

from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. and late Tuesday to Saturday from 4 p.m. to 2 a.m. For quick pick-up, call ahead: 883-FOOD (3663). Either way you will be welcomed with warm smiles and filled with spicy food.

In other new developments:

— 888 Main Street is currently being remodeled for a planned Italian restaurant to open in October. The new business is gaining a lot of press as they allowed Buffalo Rising readers to name the place. “Ciao Main” got my vote but I hear “Tre Otto” won out.

— **The Bend on Allen** is now in business at 256 Allen St. near Wadsworth St. Jason Shephard owns the tavern, staffed by a crew of Allentowners, bartender Odie reports. It is open every day from 4 p.m. to 4 a.m. with an open mic on some Wednesdays.

Mixer draws over 20 businesses

The Allentown Association’s Business Relations Committee held a business mixer for Allentown business owners on Sept. 10. Over 20 Allentown businesses were represented at the event at Quaker Bonnet Eatery.

“This committee is looking for input from our Allentown businesses as we develop our initiatives and goals” said Matthew

Ryan, Business Relations Committee chairman. “We are excited by the response to this event and hope it will foster even better communication.”

If there are any questions, comments or concerns you’d like to voice to the committee, please e-mail to: matthew.ryan@allentown.org.

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Calendar of Events

Allendale Theater, 203 Allen St. Theater of Youth presents "The Phantom Tollbooth" opening Oct. 19 at 7 p.m., continuing Oct. 20, 21, 27, 28, Nov. 3, 4, 10, 11 at 2 p.m. and Nov. 9 at 7 p.m. Theater of Youth wine tasting and silent auction, Oct. 25, 6 to 8:30 p.m. For information and tickets, call 884-4400.

Allentown Association, 14 Allen St., Annual meeting, Oct. 16, 7 p.m., Karpelas Manuscript Library Museum, 220 North St., see page 1. "Haunted Allentown," Oct. 20, noon to 7, see page 1. Board of Directors meets Nov. 20, p.m. For information call 881-1024 or e-mail allentown@bfn.org.

Art Dialogue Gallery, 1 Linwood Ave., Tuesday to Friday, 11 a.m. to 5 p.m., Saturday, 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Third annual Small Works Exhibition, Oct. 12 to Nov. 16; 13th annual Artful Gifts Exhibition, Nov. 23 through December. For information, call 885-2251.

Betty's Restaurant, 370 Virginia St. at Cottage St. Structured collages by Douglas Bauer, through Oct. 14. Photography by Valerie Dunn, Oct. 16 to Jan. 6, reception Oct. 15, 6 to 9 p.m.

College Street Gallery, 244 Allen St., Wednesday, 6 to 8 p.m., Thursday, 5 to 8 p.m.; Friday, 4 to 8 p.m. Paintings by Michael Wilczewski, Oct. 5 to 28, reception Oct 6, 7 to 10 p.m. Oct. 10th anniversary benefit party for College Street Gakkekry at Nietzsche's, 248 Allen St. Oct. 18, 8 p.m., \$5. A month of student art, works of Chris Derick, Angela McCormick, Derek Sloan and David Fiorello, a different student's work each week in November. For information call 882-9727.

El Museo, 91 Allen St., Thursday through Saturday, noon to 5. "Western New York and Beyond," paintings by Xiaouen Chen, through Oct. 20. "Altars," Day of the Dead, Oct. 27 to Nov. 10, opening reception, Oct. 27, 8 to midnight. "Prism...One Community, Many Perspectives," Pride Center LGBT artists' show, Nov. 16 to 30., opening reception Nov. 16, 7 to 9 p.m. "Spirituality," second annual "Chocolate Expressions," Dec. 8, 7 to 9 p.m., admission \$8. Satellite exhibition, "The Artist's Dog" by Yolanda Daliz, at Buffalo Museum of Science in conjunction with Viva Las Americas. For information call 884-9693.

First Presbyterian Church, Symphony Circle, **St. Louis Catholic Church**, Main and Edward Sts., and **St. Paul's Episcopal Cathedral**, Church and Franklin Sts., free guided tours of the three churches Oct. 13 and Nov. 10, beginning at St. Paul's at 10 a.m., transportation not provided.

Karpelas Manuscript Library Museum, 220 North St., Tuesdays through Sundays, 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. "Letters from the Pen," documents by famous and infamous prisoners, through November. For further information call 886-3656.

Kleinhans Community Association, monthly meetings, Oct. 17, 6 p.m., Nov. 17, 10:15 a.m., 42 Plymouth Ave., Heart of the City Neighborhoods.

Kleinhans Music Hall, Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra classical concerts, Schumann & Brahms, Oct. 12, 8 p.m. and Oct. 13, 2:30 p.m., Russian Romantics, Oct. 27, 8 p.m. and Oct. 28, 2:30 p.m., Schubert's Unfinished, Nov. 10, 8 p.m. and Nov. 11, 2:30 p.m., The Complete Brandenburgs, Nov. 30 and Dec. 1, 8 p.m. Pops series, Johnny Mathis, Oct. 6, 8 p.m., Bernstein's *West Side Story*, Oct. 20, 8 p.m. New York, New York!, Nov. 3, 8 p.m., The Golden Age of Film, Nov. 17, 8 p.m. Holiday Pops, Dec. 7 and 8, 8 p.m., Dec. 9, 2:30 p.m. For tickets and information, call 885-5000.


Nina Freudenheim Gallery, Hotel Lenox, 140 North St. Paintings by Peter Stephens through Oct. 16. Wall pieces, floor pieces and drawings by sculptor Amanda Wojick, Oct. 20 to Nov. 28. Tuesday through Friday, 10 to 5; Sunday, Monday, by appointment. For information call 882-5777.

Rust Belt Books, 202 Allen St. Clocks Ticking Backwards CD release, Oct. 6, 7 p.m. Small Press poetry series, Oct. 11, Nov 1, and 16, 7 p.m. Kalo, book release, Oct. 12, 7 p.m., Peter Williams and Friends, Sunday afternoon music, Oct. 14, 4 to 7 p.m. Music by Canadian artists, Oct. 14, 8 to 10 p.m. Cat Venom comedy improv, Oct. 20, 9 p.m. Just Buffalo open poetry reading, Oct. 21 and Nov. 18, 7 p.m. Michael Kelleher and Kyle Schlesinger, book release and poetry reading, Oct. 28, 8 p.m. For information call 885-9535.

Theodore Roosevelt Inaugural Site (Wilcox Mansion), 641 Delaware Ave., Monday to Friday 9 to 5, Saturday, Sunday, noon to 5 p.m. Victorian Christmas opening night silent auction and wine tasting, Nov. 29, 6 to 8:30 p.m.; luncheons with entertainment, Dec. 1, Dec. 3, 4, 8; candlelight dinners, with entertainment, Dec. 3, 4, 6 and 7. For reservations and additional information, call 884-0095.



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An Allentown Almanac

Life isn't fair, but it is good. —*Regina Brett, Cleveland Plain Dealer.*

About 300 people attended a showing Sept. 8 of a documentary film, "Strange Culture," to benefit the defense fund for **Steven Kurtz**, whose Allentown home was raided after the tragic death, of natural causes, of his wife on May 11, 2004. An artist and professor at the University at Buffalo, he faces federal charges of mail and wire fraud stemming from the raid...

The windows of the Allentown Association office at 14 Allen St. have been cleared, cleaned and redecorated by office manager **Andrew Eisenhardt**...The Preservation Coalition has pulled out of sharing the office space, and the Association is looking for another site and another organization to share space...

Deborah Ellis has nearly completed her term as president of the Days Park Block club and has agreed to head a new Allentown Association committee on the future of School 36. She has spearheaded efforts to develop the school building, grounds and adjacent space for housing when the school closes, now scheduled for 2009. **Delores Murphy** heads a slate expected to be elected by the block club...

More than 40 residents of lower Park St. (between Virginia and Allen Sts.) have petitioned the Common Council to revise the alternate-side-of-the-street parking to make the change-over time 6 p.m. Wednesday instead of 4 p.m. Wednesday. The proposal has been referred to committee. Other Allentown residents thinking about seeking the same for their street are asked to wait until the city decides the Park St. request...

Megan Weaver has resigned as secretary and a director of the Allentown Association because she has moved from Allentown... We're appreciative of her work here.



Enjoying themselves at the lower Park-Virginia block party, left, are Peter Smith and Emily and Ava Schoonfelder. About 35 people attended the supper in Peter Smith's garden Aug. 22. Photo by Pete Carroll.

The Allentown Neighbor

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Eaton Galleries closes after 34 years

Eaton Galleries, probably Allentown's oldest and best known antiques business, is closing its doors after 34 years

The store was opened in 1973 at 115-119 Elmwood Ave. by William Eaton and James A. Fisch. After Bill Easton's death in 1998, Jim Fisch moved the store to 110 Elmwood in 2000. Since his death last February, the store has been operated by his mother, Gertrude Fisch, assisted by Cindy Thomas, Mary Kay Patrick and Vicky Batzinski.

"Most everything went in three days" during the going-out-of-business sale, Gertrude Fisch said. She will remain at

the store until Oct. 15 to clear out records, and sell the last few items.

"Some wonderful people have come in to say goodbye, long-time customers, neighbors and people in the business," she said.

Another Allentown business is negotiating to buy the building from the estate of James Fisch and is expected to move there.

The closing is the second landmark business in Allentown to close this year, after NEO, while Eminent Design closed in May 2006.

ALLENTOWN ASSOCIATION MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

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The purpose of the Allentown Association, Inc. is to serve its community. It does that through efforts to beautify the neighborhood; to encourage historic preservation and property maintenance; to promote appropriate business development; to fight crime and to protect and enhance Allentown's unique urban ambiance.



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