

# THE CITIZEN'S HANDBOOK CIVICS IN ACTION



*The Citizen's Handbook: Civics in Action*  
Edited by Bethany Poore

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# *The Citizen's Handbook*

# INTRODUCTION

These readings represent civics in action.

The ideas, laws, procedures, and systems of government that are discussed in these pages are not just theories—they live every day in every American town. Laws are passed which give people more freedom or less. People write to their Senators and Congressmen and influence real issues. Citizens vote, most of whom would not have had that freedom at previous times in our history. The procedures for becoming an American citizen are a framework for changed lives and new hopes. Government leaders are real people with ideas, failings, friends, families, and dreams for our country. The people they lead look to them as examples and depend on them to perform their duties with integrity. Government makes a difference in your life. It is an essential way we all interact with each other as Americans.

All the action, give-and-take, opinions, plans, and memories in these pages represent our government at work in everyday life. American government is not something trapped in marble statues, penned on fading documents, stuck in black-and-white photographs, or hidden in dusty books. The American government has a pulse. We see and feel that pulse when Congress votes on an important bill, when the President holds an emergency meeting with his Cabinet, when Supreme Court justices read late into the night to understand a case, when judges administer the oath of office, when government employees listen to people explaining their problems at length over the telephone, when a custodian at the Smithsonian unlocks the front doors in the morning, when a Glacier National Park ranger drives through the wilderness in a jeep, when citizens line up on a cold Tuesday morning in November to cast their votes, when a mayor opens a new school building, when jurors give up their daily responsibilities for the sake of justice, when men in orange vests repair the Interstate, when firemen jump off their cots to respond to a bell in the middle of the night, when policemen cruise downtown to keep an eye on things, and when far out in a distant ocean U.S. sailors raise the Stars and Stripes on a cruiser. Our government is living, breathing, changing, and always moving.

I hope the varied readings in this volume give you a greater respect and appreciation for the people that make our system of government work and for the key role you play in the life of the United States of America.

*Bethany Poore*





# THE CITIZEN'S HANDBOOK

INCLUDES THESE TYPES OF ORIGINAL SOURCES:



**Journals, Memoirs,  
& Biographies**



**Documents**



**Newspaper &  
Magazine Articles**



**Virtue Stories**

**Poems**



**Songs**



**Letters**



**Speeches**





# My Country 'Tis of Thee

## Samuel F. Smith



*Samuel F. Smith wrote the following reply to an inquiry about the origins of his song, "America," commonly known as "My Country 'Tis of Thee."*

Newton Centre, Massachusetts, June 5, 1887

Mr. J. H. Johnson:

Dear Sir: The hymn "America" was not written with reference to any special occasion. A friend (Mr. Lowell Mason) put into my hands a quantity of music books in the German language early in the year 1832—because, as he said, I could read them and he couldn't—with the request that I would translate any of the hymns and songs which struck my fancy, or, neglecting the German words, with hymns or songs of my own, adapted to the tunes, so that he could use the music. On a dismal day in February, turning over the leaves of one of these music books, I fell in with the tune, which pleased me—and observing at a glance that the words were patriotic, without attempting to imitate them, or even read them throughout, I was moved at once to write a song adapted to the music—and "America" is the result. I had no thought of writing a national hymn, and was surprised when it came to be widely used. I gave it to Mr. Mason soon after it was written, and have since learned that he greatly admired it. It was first publicly used at a Sabbath school celebration of Independence in Park Street Church, Boston, on the 4th of July, 1832.

Respectfully,  
S. F. Smith.

My country, 'tis of thee,  
Sweet land of liberty,  
Of thee I sing.  
Land where my fathers died,  
Land of the pilgrims' pride,  
From every mountain side  
Let freedom ring!

My native country! Thee—  
Land of the noble free,—  
Thy name I love;  
I love thy rocks and rills,  
Thy woods and templed hills;  
My heart with rapture thrills  
Like that above.



Let music swell the breeze,  
And ring from all the trees  
Sweet freedom's song.  
Let mortal tongues awake;  
Let all that breathe partake;  
Let rocks their silence break,—  
The sound prolong.

Our fathers' God, to Thee,  
Author of liberty,  
To Thee we sing;  
Long may our land be bright  
With freedom's holy light;  
Protect us by Thy might,  
Great God, our King!



## **We, the People of . . .**

*Below are five examples of preambles (or introductions) to state constitutions. The preamble explains the purpose of the constitution and the perspective of the people who created it.*

### **Preamble to the Constitution of the State of Ohio**

We, the people of the State of Ohio, grateful to Almighty God for our freedom, to secure its blessings and promote our common welfare, do establish this Constitution.



### **Preamble to the Constitution of the State of Louisiana**

We, the people of Louisiana, grateful to Almighty God for the civil, political, economic, and religious liberties we enjoy, and desiring to protect individual rights to life, liberty, and property; afford opportunity for the fullest development of the individual; assure equality of rights; promote the health, safety, education, and welfare of the people; maintain a representative and orderly government; ensure domestic tranquility; provide for the common defense; and secure the blessings of freedom and justice to ourselves and our posterity, do ordain and establish this constitution.

### **Preamble to the Constitution of the State of Maine**

We the people of Maine, in order to establish justice, insure tranquility, provide for our mutual defense, promote our common welfare, and secure to ourselves and our posterity the blessings of liberty, acknowledging with grateful hearts the goodness of the Sovereign Ruler of the Universe in affording us an opportunity, so favorable to the design; and, imploring God's aid and direction in its accomplishment, do agree to form ourselves into a free and independent State, by the style and title of the State of Maine and do ordain and establish the following Constitution for the government of the same.

### **Preamble to the Constitution of the State of California**

We, the People of the State of California, grateful to Almighty God for our freedom, in order to secure and perpetuate its blessings, do establish this Constitution.

### **Preamble to the Constitution of the State of Montana**

We the people of Montana grateful to God for the quiet beauty of our state, the grandeur of our mountains, the vastness of our rolling plains, and desiring to improve the quality of life, equality of opportunity and to secure the blessings of liberty for this and future generations do ordain and establish this constitution.

# You Dreamed Dreams of What America Was to Be

## Woodrow Wilson

*President Woodrow Wilson spoke to a group of brand-new American citizens at Convention Hall in Philadelphia on May 10, 1915. Following are excerpts of his address.*



Mr. Mayor, Fellow Citizens: It warms my heart that you should give me such a reception; but it is not of myself that I wish to think tonight, but of those who have just become citizens of the United States.

... You have taken an oath of allegiance to a great ideal, to a great body of principles, to a great hope of the human race. You have said, "We are going to America, not only to earn a living, not only to seek the things which it was more difficult to obtain where we were born, but to help forward the great enterprises of the human spirit—to let men know that everywhere in the world there are men who will cross strange oceans and go where a speech is spoken which is alien to them if they can but satisfy their quest for what their spirits crave; knowing that whatever the speech there is but one longing and utterance of the human heart, and that is for liberty and justice.

... It is a very interesting circumstance to me, in thinking of those of you who have just sworn allegiance to this great Government, that you were drawn across the ocean by some beckoning finger of hope, by some belief, by some vision of a new kind of justice, by some expectation of a better kind of life. No doubt you have been disappointed in some of us. Some of us are very disappointing. No doubt you have found that justice in the United States goes only with a pure heart and a right purpose as it does everywhere else in the world. No doubt what you found here did not seem touched for you, after all, with the complete beauty of the ideal which you had conceived beforehand. But remember this: If we had grown at all poor in the ideal, you brought some of it with you. A man does not go out to seek the thing that is not in him. A man does not hope for the thing that he does not believe in, and if some of us have forgotten what America believed in, you, at any rate, imported in your own hearts a renewal of the belief. That is the reason that I, for one, make you welcome. If I have in any degree forgotten what America was intended for, I will thank God if you will remind me. I was born in America. You dreamed dreams of what America was to be, and I hope you brought the dreams with you. No man that does not see visions will ever realize any high hope or undertake any high enterprise. Just because you brought dreams with you, America is more likely to realize dreams such as you brought. You are enriching us if you came expecting us to be better than we are.

... You have come into this great nation voluntarily seeking something that we have to give, and all that we have to give is this: We cannot exempt you from work. No man is exempt from work anywhere in the world. We cannot exempt you from the strife and heartbreaking burden of the struggle of the day—that is common to mankind everywhere; we cannot exempt



*Woodrow Wilson*

you from the loads that you must carry. We can only make them light by the spirit in which they are carried. That is the spirit of hope, it is the spirit of liberty, it is the spirit of justice.

When I was asked, therefore, by the Mayor and the committee that accompanied him to come up from Washington to meet this great company of newly admitted citizens, I could not decline the invitation. I ought not to be away from Washington, and yet I feel that it has renewed my spirit as an American to be here. In Washington men tell you so many things every day that are not so, and I like to come and stand in the presence of a great body of my fellow-citizens, whether they have been my fellow-citizens a long time or a short time, and drink, as it were, out of the common fountains with them and go back feeling what you have so generously given me—the sense of your support and of the living vitality in your hearts of the great ideals which have made America the hope of the world.



*Newly Arrived Immigrants*



# The Archivist's Code

## Wayne C. Grover



*Wayne C. Grover began working at the National Archives in 1935, when it was a new organization. He previously worked as a journalist and a Senate aide. He rose quickly in the National Archives organization and became a skilled, trusted archivist. He was appointed by Harry S. Truman as the third Archivist of the United States in 1948. He served for 17 years, longer than any archivist before or since. He developed The Archivist's Code in 1955 to help archivists make decisions as they execute their responsibilities.*

The archivist has a moral obligation to society to preserve evidence on how things actually happened and to take every measure for the physical preservation of valuable records. On the other hand, he has an obligation not to commit funds to the housing and care of records that have no significance or lasting value.



*Wayne C. Grover*

The archivist must realize that in selecting records for retention or disposal he acts as the agent of the future in determining its heritage from the past. Therefore, insofar as his intellectual attainments, experience, and judgment permit, he must be ever conscious of the future's needs, making his decisions impartially without taint of ideological, political, or personal bias.

The archivist must be watchful in protecting the integrity of records in his custody. He must guard them against defacement, alteration, or theft; he must protect them against physical damage by fire or excessive exposure to light, damp, and dryness; and he must take care to see that their evidentiary value is not impaired in the normal course of rehabilitation, arrangement, and use.

The archivist should endeavor to promote access to records to the fullest extent consistent with the public interest, but he should carefully observe any established policies restricting the use of records. Within the bounds of his budget and opportunities, he should work unremittingly for the increase and diffusion of knowledge, making his documentary holdings freely known to prospective users through published finding aids and personal consultation.

The archivist should respond courteously and with a spirit of service to all proper requests, but he should not waste time responding in detail to frivolous or unreasonable inquiries. He should not place unnecessary obstacles in the way of those who would use the records, but rather should do whatever he can to spare their time and ease their work. Obviously, he should not idly discuss the work and findings of one searcher with another; but where duplication of research effort is apparent, he may properly inform one searcher of the work of another.

The archivist should not profit from any commercial exploitation of the records in his custody, nor should he withhold from others any information he has gained as a result of his archival work in order to carry out private professional research. He should, however, take every legitimate advantage of his favored situation to develop his professional interests in historical and other research.

The archivist should freely pass on to his professional colleagues the results of his own or his organization's research that add to the body of archival knowledge. Likewise, he should leave to his successors a true account of the records in his custody and of their proper organization and arrangement.

Wayne C. Grover

Archivist of the United States



*Work at the National Archives*



# Response to an Invitation from the Citizens of Washington

## Thomas Jefferson



*Thomas Jefferson received an invitation from Roger Weightman, mayor of Washington, D.C., to participate in the city's celebration of the 50th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence. Jefferson's response was the last letter he wrote. He died ten days later on July 4, 1826, the date of the 50th anniversary.*

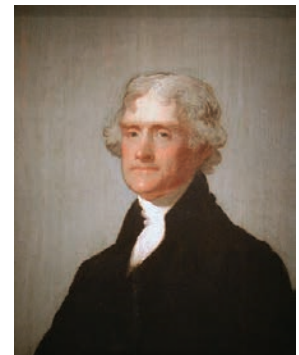
Monticello June 24. [18]26

Respected Sir

The kind invitation I receive from you on the part of the citizens of the city of Washington, to be present with them at their celebration of the 50th anniversary of American independence; as one of the surviving signers of an instrument pregnant with our own, and the fate of the world, is most flattering to myself, and heightened by the honorable accompaniment proposed for the comfort of such a journey. It adds sensibly to the sufferings of sickness, to be deprived by it of a personal participation in the rejoicings of that day. But acquiescence is a duty, under circumstances not placed among those we are permitted to control. I should, indeed, with peculiar delight, have met and exchanged there congratulations personally with the small band, the remnant of that host of worthies, who joined with us on that day, in the bold and doubtful election we were to make for our country, between submission or the sword; and to have enjoyed with them the consolatory fact, that our fellow citizens, after half a century of experience and prosperity, continue to approve the choice we made. May it be to the world, what I believe it will be, (to some parts sooner, to others later, but finally to all,) the Signal of arousing men to burst the chains, under which monkish ignorance and superstition had persuaded them to bind themselves, and to assume the blessings & security of self-government. That form which we have substituted, restores the free right to the unbounded exercise of reason and freedom of opinion. All eyes are opened, or opening, to the rights of man. The general spread of the light of science has already laid open to every view the palpable truth, that the mass of mankind has not been born with saddles on their backs, nor a favored few booted and spurred, ready to ride them legitimately, by the grace of God. These are grounds of hope for others. For ourselves, let the annual return of this day forever refresh our recollections of these rights, and an undiminished devotion to them.

I will ask permission here to express the pleasure with which I should have met my ancient neighbors of the City of Washington and of its vicinities, with whom I passed so many years of a pleasing social intercourse; an intercourse which so much relieved the anxieties of the public cares, and left impressions so deeply engraved in my affections, as never to be forgotten. With my regret that ill health forbids me the gratification of an acceptance, be pleased to receive for yourself, and those for whom you write, the assurance of my highest respect and friendly attachments.

Th. Jefferson



Thomas Jefferson



## The First Prayer of the Continental Congress

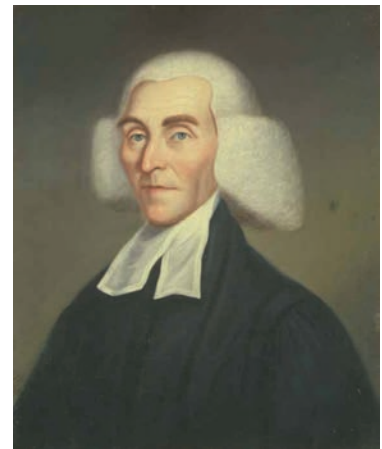
### Jacob Duché

*Jacob Duché, Rector of Christ Church of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, offered the first prayer before the Continental Congress on September 7, 1774, at 9:00 a.m.*

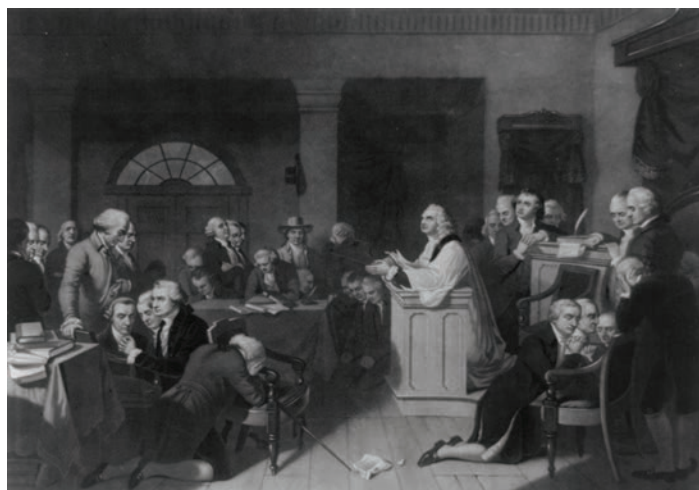
O Lord our Heavenly Father, high and mighty King of kings, and Lord of lords, who dost from thy throne behold all the dwellers on earth and reignest with power supreme and uncontrolled over all the Kingdoms, Empires and Governments; look down in mercy, we beseech Thee, on these our American States, who have fled to Thee from the rod of the oppressor and thrown themselves on Thy gracious protection, desiring to be henceforth dependent only on Thee. To Thee have they appealed for the righteousness of their cause; to Thee do they now look up for that countenance and support, which Thou alone canst give. Take them, therefore, Heavenly Father, under Thy nurturing care; give them wisdom in Council and valor in the field; defeat the malicious designs of our cruel adversaries; convince them of the unrighteousness of their Cause and if they persist in their sanguinary purposes, of own unerring justice, sounding in their hearts, constrain them to drop the weapons of war from their unnerved hands in the day of battle!

Be Thou present, O God of wisdom, and direct the councils of this honorable assembly; enable them to settle things on the best and surest foundation. That the scene of blood may be speedily closed; that order, harmony and peace may be effectually restored, and truth and justice, religion and piety, prevail and flourish amongst the people. Preserve the health of their bodies and vigor of their minds; shower down on them and the millions they here represent, such temporal blessings as Thou seest expedient for them in this world and crown them with everlasting glory in the world to come. All this we ask in the name and through the merits of Jesus Christ, Thy Son and our Savior.

Amen.



*Jacob Duché*



*Painting of the First Prayer in Congress*

# Three Branches—Excerpts from the Constitution



*The United States Constitution outlines the division of power among three branches of government. The first three articles of the Constitution detail the organization and responsibilities of these three branches.*

## Article I.

### Section 1.

All legislative Powers herein granted shall be vested in a Congress of the United States, which shall consist of a Senate and House of Representatives.

## Article II.

### Section 1.

The executive Power shall be vested in a President of the United States of America. He shall hold his Office during the Term of four Years, and, together with the Vice President, chosen for the same Term, be elected, as follows . . . .

## Article III.

### Section 1.

The judicial Power of the United States shall be vested in one supreme Court, and in such inferior Courts as the Congress may from time to time ordain and establish. The Judges, both of the supreme and inferior Courts, shall hold their Offices during good Behaviour, and shall, at stated Times, receive for their Services a Compensation, which shall not be diminished during their Continuance in Office.



*Legislative*



*Executive*



*Judicial*



## Letter to the Governor of Connecticut

### Roger Sherman and Oliver Ellsworth

*Roger Sherman (1721-1793) and Oliver Ellsworth (1745-1807), delegates from Connecticut to the Constitutional Convention, sent a copy of the newly-created Constitution to the governor of their home state. They explained some of the ways the Constitution differed from the Articles of Confederation.*

LETTER FROM THE HON. ROGER SHERMAN,  
AND THE HON. OLIVER ELLSWORTH, ESQUIRES,  
DELEGATES FROM THE STATE OF CONNECTICUT,  
IN THE LATE FEDERAL CONVENTION,  
TO HIS EXCELLENCY, THE GOVERNOR OF SAID STATE.

New London, September 26, 1787.

Sir: We have the honor to transmit to your excellency a printed copy of the Constitution formed by the Federal Convention, to be laid before the legislature of the state.

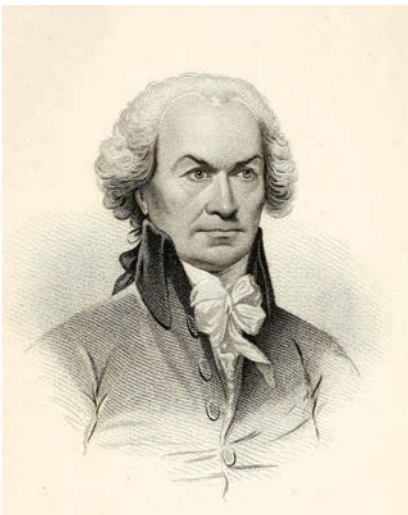
The general principles which governed the Convention in their deliberations on the subject, are stated in their address to Congress.

We think it may be of use to make some further observations on particular parts of the Constitution.

The Congress is differently organized; yet the whole number of members, and this state's proportion of suffrage, remain the same as before.

The equal representation of the states in the Senate, and the voice of that branch in the appointment to offices, will secure the rights of the lesser, as well as of the greater states.

Some additional powers are vested in Congress, which was a principal object that the states had in view in appointing the Convention. Those powers extend only to matters respecting the common interests of the Union, and are specially defined, so that the particular states retain their sovereignty in all other matters.



*Oliver Ellsworth*

The objects for which Congress may apply moneys are the same mentioned in the eighth article of the Confederation, viz., for the common defense and general welfare, and for payment of the debts incurred for those purposes. It is probable that the principal branch of revenue will be duties on imports. What may be necessary to be raised by direct taxation is to be apportioned on the several states, according to the number of their inhabitants; and although Congress may raise the money by their own authority, if necessary, yet that authority need not be exercised, if each state will furnish its quota.

The restraint on the legislatures of the several states respecting emitting bills of credit, making any thing but money a tender in payment of debts, or impairing the obligation of contracts by ex post facto laws, was thought necessary as a



security to commerce, in which the interest of foreigners, as well as of the citizens of different states, may be affected.

The Convention endeavored to provide for the energy of government on the one hand, and suitable checks on the other hand, to secure the rights of the particular states, and the liberties and properties of the citizens. We wish it may meet the approbation of the several states, and be a means of securing their rights, and lengthening out their tranquility.

With great respect, we are, sir, your excellency's obedient, humble servants,

Roger Sherman,  
Oliver Ellsworth

[To] His Excellency, Governor Huntington.



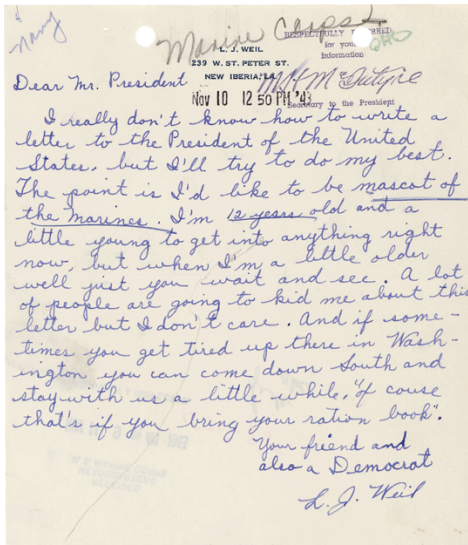
*Roger Sherman*



## Mascot of the Marines

### L. J. Weil and W. E. Burke

This letter arrived at the White House in November of 1943, in the midst of World War II. It was referred to the Marine Corps, a representative of which wrote the reply that follows. L. J. Weil is an example of the spirit of service and dedication to his country.



Dear Mr. President,

I really don't know how to write a letter to the President of the United States, but I'll try to do my best. The point is I'd like to be mascot of the Marines. I'm 12 years old and a little young to get into anything right now, but when I'm a little older well just you wait and see. A lot of people are going to kid me about this letter but I don't care. And if sometimes you get tired up there in Washington you can come down South and stay with us a little while, "of course that's if you bring your ration book."

Your friend and also a Democrat,  
L. J. Weil

Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps  
Washington, D.C.

12 November 1943

Dear Weil,

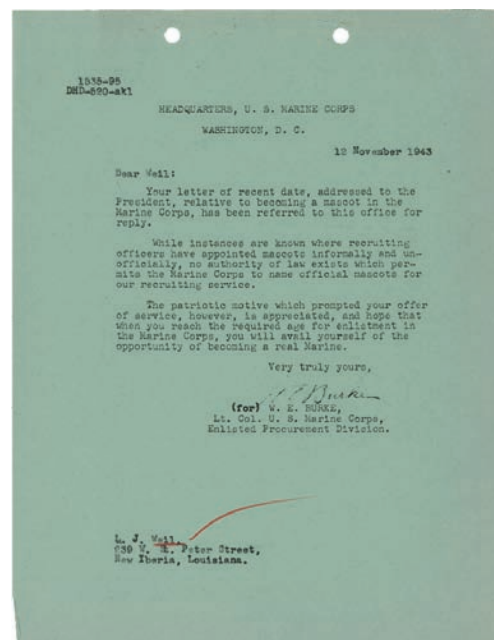
Your letter of recent date, addressed to the President, relative to becoming a mascot in the Marine Corps, has been referred to this office for reply.

While instances are known where recruiting officers have appointed mascots informally and unofficially, no authority of law exists which permits the Marine Corps to name official mascots for our recruiting service.

The patriotic motive which prompted your offer of service, however, is appreciated, and hope that when you reach the required age for enlistment in the Marine Corps, you will avail yourself of the opportunity of becoming a real Marine.

Very truly yours,  
W. E. Burke

Lt. Col. U.S. Marine Corps,  
Enlisted Procurement Division





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