



Saint Mary's Home of Erie

Caring across the Centuries

125 Years

Our Mission

Founded by the Sisters of St. Joseph and operated in the Catholic tradition, Saint Mary's Home of Erie is committed to an environment of loving to care where primarily seniors, their families, staff and volunteers participate in fostering an atmosphere of community.

Our Vision

Saint Mary's Home of Erie, through partnership, networking and referrals will be a principal enabler to primarily seniors in the Erie community aiding them in living their lives in a respectful, dignified and fulfilled manner.

Caring across the Centuries  *125 years*
Saint Mary's East • Saint Mary's at Asbury Ridge



Saint Mary's Home of Erie

Standing on the Shoulders of Giants

– Sister Phyllis McCracken, SSJ, President/CEO, Saint Mary's Home of Erie, 2008



Saint Mary's Home Residents and Staff 1894

125 years ago,
the Sisters of St. Joseph
had a dream...

The dream begins when Mother Agnes Spencer and a small group of Sisters were called to the Erie area by Bishop Josue Young. It was during the post Civil War period when the country was in a rebuilding and growth period. In 1870, under the leadership of Mother Agnes, the Sisters of St. Joseph opened St. Joseph's Hospital in Meadville and in 1875 they opened St. Vincent's Hospital in Erie. Many of the elderly in the Erie Diocese recovering from illnesses were given shelter in the Sisters' hospitals.

The Sisters of St. Joseph wanted nothing more than to provide these elderly with a place to live, a home for the aged. With insightful thinking, the Sisters under the leadership of Mother Ambrosia Power, Superior General of the Community, sought approval from Bishop Tobias Mullen to build a home for the elderly. Bishop Mullen gave his permission and on March 19, 1883, the Community Corporators authorized the Sisters to purchase 5 acres of swampland at East 26th and Ash Streets from John Gensheimer for \$5,000. The land they purchased was in the heart of then called Marvintown, an area where many of Erie's German immigrants settled.

The Sisters ordered the plans to build Saint Mary's Home on May 6, 1883. During the construction, Mother Ambrosia went out of office and Mother Clotilda Weinheimer oversaw the completion of the project. Mother Clotilda appointed Sister Jerome Cronin as Superior of the Home.



Sr. Jerome Cronin

Saint Mary's Home of Erie, a sponsored ministry of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Northwestern Pennsylvania, opened its doors on September 21, 1884. It was a two-story brick building that became the home of fifteen aged people who were previously residing at St. Vincent's Hospital. Saint Mary's Home was one of the first homes in the country dedicated to the aged.



Saint Mary's original building was blessed by Bishop Mullen on December 14, 1884.

After the opening of Saint Mary's Home, the Sisters soon developed a close relationship with St. John's Parish which was located just one block away. Beginning in 1889, the Parish offered spiritual care to Saint Mary's Home while many of the Sisters taught at St. John's School which had opened in 1870.

By 1890, the need was apparent for Saint Mary's Home to open its doors to more people. Sister Jerome Cronin extended an invitation to "the friendless and the feeble of the Diocese." The first to apply for admission were Michael and Bridget Quinn. The Sisters also took in several small children from the overcrowded orphanage.

In 1891, Sister Teresa Toomey was selected by Mother Eugenia Quirk, the fourth General Superior of the Community, to replace Sister Jerome as Superior of Saint Mary's Home. Over the next several years Saint Mary's would continue to grow.



Sr. Teresa Toomey



Bishop Tobias Mullen dedicated the Home's first chapel in 1894.

Under the leadership of Mother Eugenia Quirk, a chapel was built at Saint Mary's Home. The chapel was comforting to the frail and sick that could not walk to Saint John's. The chapel was dedicated in 1894 by Bishop Tobias Mullen.

On October 15, 1906, the feast day of Sister Teresa Toomey, the groundbreaking began on a new addition for Saint Mary's Home. The addition came at the time of a population boom in Erie. It was apparent the original building was no longer sufficient in meeting the needs of the elderly in the Erie community. Part of the addition also included enlarging the chapel. Sister Teresa was still Superior of Saint Mary's Home and oversaw the installation of a beautiful stained glass window behind the altar. It displayed Our Lord appearing to the Blessed Margaret Mary. A dedication ceremony was held in July of 1908.



Saint Mary's Home in 1907. The stained glass window located behind the altar in the chapel illustrated Our Lord appearing to the Blessed Margaret Mary.



Residents enjoyed quiet conversation with friends at mealtime.

Under the succeeding Superiors of the Home, Saint Mary's continued to grow, eventually accommodating over 50 residents. The residents enjoyed new features like the large dining room with small tables seating four. This arrangement encouraged a family-like atmosphere among the residents. The Sisters also put in place a system to help offset the cost to live at Saint Mary's Home for those who needed assistance.

These residents were able to help with many of the responsibilities that needed fulfilled on a daily basis. They helped set tables, wash dishes, launder linens and maintain the grounds.

The leadership at Saint Mary's Home decided to file an application for Community Chest funds in 1922. They were approved and received the funds over a period of years.

The new addition served the needs of the Erie community for 20 years.

In 1927, a catastrophic fire destroyed a large portion of Saint Mary's Home. The cause was believed to be a blowtorch used by tinsmiths and plumbers. The fire required the assistance of every Erie fireman along with many other volunteers. Archbishop John Mark Gannon came to the

scene to be certain no one was injured and that all had housing. Saint Vincent's Hospital cared for the residents who were bed bound. The Soldiers and Sailors Home and Lutheran Home for the Aged, along with friends and family, took in the other residents.



Archbishop John Mark Gannon

After the fire, insurance adjustments were made and reconstruction of Saint Mary's Home began. The newly appointed Superior, Sister Thomas Gallagher, oversaw the resurgence of Saint Mary's Home. On March 31, 1928, the residents were welcomed back to their home.



Sr. Thomas Gallagher

By 1929, it was again apparent the Sisters of St. Joseph, in looking to the future, needed to consider another addition due to the congested living space and other needs of Saint Mary's Home. At this point over 700 residents had lived at Saint Mary's. Archbishop Gannon, Mother Helena Dillon and

the Sisters agreed that a new addition was needed to meet these demands. A building fund was started by Archbishop Gannon with a gift of \$25,000 towards the new addition.

Sister Thomas built on the generous donation by Archbishop Gannon by forming a women's auxiliary that would assist with furnishing the new wing. The women were from the area Catholic parishes. On October 3, 1929, these women officially organized as the Saint Mary's Home Auxiliary. The Auxiliary was 1,000 members strong by 1930. They were able to solicit the Erie community to help furnish the expansion of Saint Mary's Home, even during the Great Depression!



The second floor chapel was enlarged to accommodate newcomers after the 1930 addition.



Residents posed with Archbishop Gannon after he blessed the 32-room wing of the Home on July 5, 1942.

Noted Architect, Walter T. Monahan designed the project which was completed in 1930. The Auxiliary hosted a three-day bazaar from December 2 – 4 that previewed the new addition. It was attended by hundreds of people. Archbishop Gannon dedicated the new Saint Mary's Home on December 10, 1930. A home for the aged which was recently devastated by fire was again a cornerstone for the people it served. The new addition provided room for 70 more residents. It showcased modern furnishings, spacious grounds and beautiful courtyards. Several adjacent properties were purchased between 1934 and 1938, adding to the beauty of the campus.

By 1941, Saint Mary's needed to consider another addition. More bedroom spaces were needed and a long waiting list existed. In May of 1941, Mother Helena Dillon, with the approval of Archbishop Gannon, broke ground for an additional 32 private rooms.



Hundreds of handmade quilts were stitched by the Auxiliary and awarded as prizes at the annual card parties over the years. (1940's)

By this time, Sister Thomas Gallagher managed Saint Mary's Home for almost 17 years. She oversaw many construction and remodeling projects during her tenure despite trying times. After years of service to Saint Mary's, Sister Thomas unexpectedly passed away. Sister Mary Agnita Healy and later Sister Martha Kuntz were named the Superiors of Saint Mary's Home by Mother Aurelia A'Hearn, General Superior.



Sr. Mary Agnita Healy



Sr. Martha Kuntz

By the 1950's, the U.S. Census indicated the 65 and over population had doubled since 1900. Advances in medicine enabled people to live longer. The number of elderly who became frail, sick and in need of care substantially increased. Again, with the forward thinking of the Sisters of St. Joseph, a new addition to Saint Mary's Home was envisioned. Mother Aurelia A'Hearn and Archbishop Gannon agreed the addition of a geriatric hospital would greatly aid in caring for the elderly population that was chronically ill.



Residents from Saint Mary's Home enjoy an outing at Villa Joseph, the lakeside retreat of the Sisters of St. Joseph. (Circa 1954)



The groundbreaking for the new geriatric hospital in 1955 sparked off another building project. Archbishop Gannon officiates (center) while General Mother Superior Aurelia A'Hearn looks on (far right).



Sr. Rosalita Boyle

On August 3, 1955, the Sisters of St. Joseph broke ground for the 110 bed Saint Mary's Geriatric Hospital which included 45 private rooms. Sister Rosalita Boyle was appointed the new Administrator of Saint Mary's Home. The new Geriatric Hospital, designed by Nelson, Goldberg and Heidt, was one of the first of its kind in the country. It was modern in appearance and infused with advances in technology.



During the 1960's and 1970's, there was a growing demand for professional skills to treat the specific ailments associated with the aging population.





Now, more than ever, the role of caregivers at Saint Mary's Home became increasingly more challenging. The Sisters were diligent in keeping up with the changing times. Nurses became educated in the field of geriatric care. They assumed many increased responsibilities with the care of the aged.

Previous page: Sister Rosalita Boyle extends a warm welcome to a new resident and tours civic leaders through the efficient new geriatric hospital.

Shown above: The first television set is introduced to the Home. Residents worship in the grotto and others enjoy shuffleboard.



Katherine Barrett, former Social Services Director at Saint Mary's, explains admission procedures to families and residents.

Through strong leadership and good business sense, the future of Saint Mary's Home again became engraved within the Erie community when the Sisters of St. Joseph recommended that Saint Mary's Home of Erie become a corporation. In June of 1974, Articles of Incorporation became effective.

The Sisters of St. Joseph felt the purpose of the new corporation would be to "provide for the physical, psychological, social and spiritual needs of the senior members of society; through dedicated concern for the total need, to provide these services both in a retirement residential setting and a Skilled Nursing Facility; to provide these services without distinction regarding race, color, sex, national origin or creed and without pecuniary gain or profit incidentally or otherwise to its members."

The philosophy of Saint Mary's Home of Erie was based on the recognition of the worth and dignity of the resident as a person created by God for the purpose of serving Him, and continues to give the resident the right to as full a life as their condition permits.

In 1974, Bishop Alfred M. Watson, respecting the Sisters efficient operation of Saint Mary's for almost 100 years, approached Saint Mary's Administration with a challenge.

The unmet needs of the ill elderly in the Erie area were of concern to the Bishop and he wanted to provide them with the nursing care that was needed.



Bishop Alfred M. Watson

The Diocese had already decided to develop nursing homes in Sharon and DuBois Pennsylvania.



Sr. Leonie Shanley

Bishop Watson approached Sister Leonie Shanley, General Superior of the Sisters of St. Joseph, asking if Saint Mary's would consider expanding its existing facility. It was decided to accept this challenge and expand Saint Mary's with a 100 bed Skilled Nursing Facility.

This was the area the Sisters felt was most needed to help address the needs of the Erie community. The Diocese agreed to build the structure, assuming the debt of \$2.9 million. Bishop Watson successfully reached this goal through the annual Diocesan Appeal and turned the keys over to the Sisters of St. Joseph.

The groundbreaking for the new addition was on February 3, 1976. The Architects were Heidt, Evans and Salata. Monsignor Robert McDonald and Sister Maria Onuffer, Administrator of Saint Mary's Home, supervised the construction. It was completed in September of 1977 and the Diocese turned it over to the Sisters. Saint Mary's Home quickly reached full occupancy by May of 1978.

The new structure had two units that each contained 24 semi-private rooms and two suites with centrally located nurses' stations. It also included a very modern chapel that seated over 100 people along with an area for wheelchairs. A second floor balcony in the chapel also gave easy access to residents for services.



Sr. Maria Onuffer



Bishop Alfred M. Watson and the entire Saint Mary's community joined in the celebration to mark the dedication of the new St. Joseph Chapel, completed in 1977.

Designated areas for activities, therapy, beauty/barber services and Administration were included in the facility. It was evident this modern design was intended to nurture the whole person in spirit, mind and body.



In addition to the beautiful facility and the amenities offered, a Medical Director was on staff. Social workers were available to counsel both residents and families. An Interdisciplinary Team was formed to develop a comprehensive care plan for each resident.



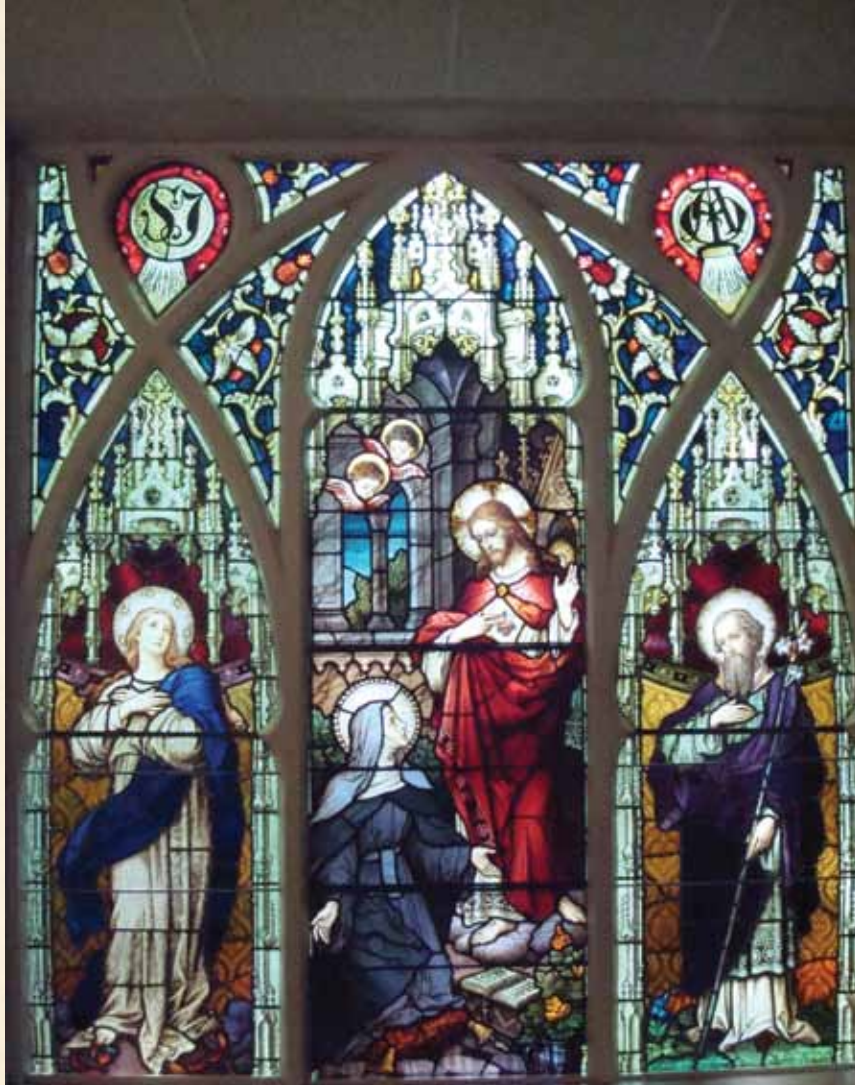
At left: Nurses at Saint Mary's take a personal interest in each resident entrusted to their care. Above: A team of professionals develops an individualized plan for each new resident, encouraging families to take an active role in the process.

The Friends of Saint Mary's, our volunteers, was founded in 1981 to assist with recreational activities. In 1983 Saint Mary's started publishing a bi-monthly newsletter called "The Mirror." It was, and remains, a means for communicating the life within the walls of Saint Mary's Home of Erie.

In the early 1980's, a portion of the residential area of the facility, built over 100 years ago, was in need of extensive repair. Sister Leonella Gingenbach was the General Superior at that time. The Board, Sister Anastasia Valimont (Administrator), with the approval of the Sisters, made the decision to demolish that portion of the building. It included a chapel, kitchen and dining facilities. It was replaced with two new structures that were completed in October of 1987. The current lobby on Ash Street contains a beautiful stained glass window preserved from the old chapel.



Sr. Leonella Gingenbach





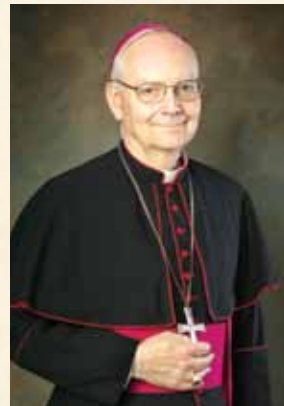
Sr. Anastasia Valimont

Under the leadership of Sister Anastasia and the Board, a new service would be offered to the Erie community called Saint Mary's Adult Day Care Center. It opened on November 30, 1987 and is currently known as Adult Day Services. The program was a collaboration between Saint Mary's Home and SeniorSource at Saint Vincent Health Center as an active way to preserve the independence of seniors and eliminate pre-mature institutionalization. Still in operation today by Saint Mary's Home of Erie, it provides an opportunity for social, recreational and developmental activities for seniors during the day. This unique program frees family caregivers for work or other daytime activities without having to place their loved one under 24 hour care.

Saint Mary's Home of Erie continued to grow with the world around it. The Administration worked tirelessly to ensure that residents received the highest quality of care available. Advances in technology and specialized services, specifically for gerontological care, were constantly being infused into

individual care plans for residents. It was during the early 1990's when Sister Anastasia and Saint Mary's Leadership would pioneer a dedicated specialized service for the Erie Community.

In 1990, Bishop Donald W. Trautman was named the ninth Bishop of Erie. The General Superior at that time was Sister Mary Fromknecht.



Bishop Donald W. Trautman

Photo by: Mark Feinstein for the Erie Diocese



Sr. Mary Fromknecht



In 1991, the Gallagher Center opened at Saint Mary's Home. It was the first free-standing facility in Northwestern Pennsylvania for those persons with a diagnosis of Alzheimer's disease or related disorders. The main purpose of this facility was to provide a caring environment that permitted residents to achieve their highest level of independence for as long as possible. Wiebel, Rydzewski & Schuster were the architects for this and the 1987 buildings.

By the mid-1990's, Saint Mary's Leadership again saw the need to expand so it could accommodate the demand in the Erie area. Saint Mary's was almost always at capacity and the wait list became long for admission. Sister Mary Fromknecht remained the General Superior. Sister Anastasia, the Administration, and Board put in place the plans for a new Saint Mary's westside campus and construction began.



Saint Mary's renovated the Reed Street entrance in 1993. The renovation included an atrium and a three foot elevation of the main driveway.



Sr. Phyllis McCracken

On October 1, 2001, Sister Anastasia retired after 26 years of devoted service to Saint Mary's Home. Sister Phyllis McCracken was named her successor as the Administrator for Saint Mary's East and President/CEO of Saint Mary's Home of Erie. She was most recently the Vice President for Special Projects and then Vice President for Planning at Saint Mary's Home of Erie.

On October 2, 2001, Sister Phyllis proudly introduced a second Saint Mary's campus to the Erie community. Saint Mary's at Asbury Ridge opened in Millcreek Township on a

beautiful 34 acre site. The facility includes 74 residential living units, 16 Alzheimer's residential living units and an 80 bed Skilled Nursing Facility with all private rooms.





*Sr. Nancy Prenatt, Sr. Phyllis DiFuccia and
Sr. Ricarda Vincent*

Ridge. Audrey Urban, Vice President for Residential Services, was named the new Administrator for Saint Mary's at Asbury Ridge. The Sisters Leadership Team, at this time, included Sister Ricarda Vincent, Sister Phyllis DiFuccia and Sister Nancy Prenatt.

A water disaster struck Saint Mary's East on February 28, 2002. A problem that involved a toilet valve forced pressurized water to flow like rivers through the east hallways of the two nursing units along with the office suite and into the basement area. Fortunately, no one was injured and 48 residents were evacuated safely within the building. The extensive water

Now Saint Mary's Home of Erie would have two locations serving the Erie community; Saint Mary's East, which is the corporate office and Saint Mary's at Asbury

damage required the temporary move of the 48 residents to Pleasant Ridge Manor West and other nursing facilities. Those residents were able to return to Saint Mary's by March 20, 2002.

On June 7, 2002, Sister Mary Fromknecht, Assistant Administrator of Saint Mary's East, was named the Administrator of Saint Mary's East. This allowed Sister Phyllis to concentrate on her responsibilities as the President/CEO.

Unbelievably, a second water disaster would devastate Saint Mary's on January 12, 2004. This time it was at the Asbury Ridge campus. The sprinkler system froze and water from the fire system spilled onto the hallways on one of the nursing units. Employees quickly and safely removed 39 residents from the area. They were given temporary shelter at several area nursing facilities including Saint Mary's East until the water damage was repaired. The Administration, employees



*Sr. Ricarda Vincent, Sr. Mary Ellen Dwyer and
Sr. Rosemary O'Brien*

and residents all persevered through the disasters. The damage was repaired and the floods became part of Saint Mary's deep rooted history. At this time the Leadership Team for the Sisters of St. Joseph included Sister Ricarda Vincent, Sister Rosemary O'Brien and Sister Mary Ellen Dwyer.

In June of 2005, Saint Mary's Home of Erie was accredited as a Continuing Care Retirement Facility.

In 2006, Saint Mary's Leadership extended the continuum of care offered at Saint Mary's Home to active seniors by offering 26 independent living homes called The Carriage Homes at Asbury Ridge. They are located on the Asbury Ridge campus and are available in three different styles called The Derby, The Preakness and The Belmont.



Saint Mary's Home of Erie now proudly offers the Erie community a continuum of specialized services that includes Independent Living, Residential Living, Personal Care Services, Adult Day Services, Rehabilitative Therapies, Respite Care, Nursing Care and Alzheimer's Care.

Pictured are Mark DiVecchio, County Executive; Sister Phyllis McCracken, Saint Mary's President/CEO, William Flaherty Jr., Chairperson of Saint Mary's Board of Trustees; and Erie Mayor Joseph Sinnott breaking ground for the Replacement and Renovation Project at Saint Mary's East.



*Sr. Moira Sullivan, Sr. Mary Ellen Dwyer and
Sr. Joyce Lowrey*

Saint Mary's East was rededicated to the Erie community in 2008 with the commencement of a \$21 million dollar Replacement and Renovation Project. As with many of their predecessors, Sister Phyllis, the Board and Leadership Team had the foresight to understand the increased expectations for retirement communities from a new generation of seniors, the Baby Boomer Generation. Sister Mary Ellen Dwyer, Sister Joyce Lowrey and Sister Moira Sullivan were then, and remain at this time, the members of the Sisters of St. Joseph Leadership Team.

The East campus was expanded with a new addition that would add to the current nursing wings, but allow for 100 all private rooms. The new addition was completed in September of 2009 and includes 56 private nursing rooms with European showers. The existing nursing rooms will be renovated to complement the new addition with a culmination of the renovations by 2010. The Replacement and Renovation Project was Sister Phyllis' vision as a thank you and a gift to the Erie community in honor of Saint Mary's 125th Anniversary.



Today, caring for more than 400 seniors, Saint Mary's Home of Erie is licensed for 514 beds which allow accommodations for couples in some residential rooms. It is also licensed for 49 Adult Day Services clients. The 2008 occupancy level was 99% which reinforces the quality of care that is offered. Saint Mary's is a clinical and educational site for nursing students from Gannon University, Edinboro University, Mercyhurst College, Penn State Behrend and Erie Business Center. More than 72 volunteers, known as the Friends of Saint Mary's, donate their time to help residents enjoy active and productive lifestyles. Saint Mary's Auxiliary, organized 80 years ago, still flourishes. They continue to support the Saint Mary's community by raising money for special projects.



As we celebrate and honor Saint Mary's Home of Erie as a not-for-profit continuing care retirement facility, we give thanks to those who laid the groundwork 125 years ago. It is by "Standing on the Shoulders of Giants" that we can now look to the future in servicing the needs of seniors with our mission of "Loving to Care" and "fostering an atmosphere of community" in a Catholic faith-based home.



*On the occasion of our 100th Anniversary, we introduced the olive branch
as our new symbol. Since olive trees provide shelter and opportunity for rest,
the symbol represents healing, inner harmony, and peace with God.
We rededicated ourselves to these ideals as we entered our second century....*



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Saint Mary's East • Saint Mary's at Asbury Ridge

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