



Smithsonian

National Museum of African American History and Culture

Records of the Superintendent of Education
for the State of Texas Bureau of Refugees,
Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865–1870

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Collection Overview

Repository:	National Museum of African American History and Culture
Title:	Records of the Superintendent of Education for the State of Texas Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865–1870
Date:	1865–1870
Identifier:	NMAAHC.FB.M822
Extent:	18 Reels
Language:	English .
Summary:	The collection is comprised of digital surrogates previously available on the 18 rolls of microfilm described in the NARA publication M822. These digital surrogates reproduced the records of the Superintendent of Education for the State of Texas, Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865–1870. The records consist of 12 volumes and some unbound documents. The volumes include letters and endorsements sent, registers of letters received, and record books pertaining to schools, teachers, and educational expenditures of the Bureau. The unbound documents consist primarily of letters and reports received.
Digital Content:	Image(s): M822-Representative-Image

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

Acquired from FamilySearch International in 2015.

Related Materials

See also [Freedmen's Bureau Digital Collection](#)

Preferred Citation

Courtesy of the U. S. National Archives and Records Administration, FamilySearch International, and the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture.

Restrictions

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Historical Note

[The following is reproduced from the original NARA descriptive pamphlet for M822.]

HISTORY AND ORGANIZATION

The Freedmen's Bureau, as the Bureau was commonly known, was established in the War Department by an act of March 3, 1865 (13 Stat. 507). Maj. Gen. Oliver Otis Howard, appointed Commissioner by the President in May 1865, served in that position throughout the life of the Bureau. The Bureau was twice extended by the acts of July 16, 1866 (14 Stat. 173), and July 6, 1868 (15 Stat. 83). In January 1869, in accordance with an act of July 25, 1868 (15 Stat. 193), its operations in the States were terminated except for educational functions and the collection of claims. Remaining activities were terminated June 30, 1872, in accordance with an act of June 10, 1872 (17 Stat. 366).

Although the Bureau was part of the War Department, its work was primarily social and economic in nature. It cooperated with benevolent societies in issuing supplies to destitute persons and in maintaining freedmen's schools; supervised labor contracts between black employees and white employers; helped black soldiers and sailors to collect bounty claims, pensions, and backpay; and attended to the disposition of confiscated or abandoned lands and other property. In Texas, much of the Bureau's time and effort was expended in protecting freedmen from persecution, intimidation, and physical violence at the hands of whites or other freedmen.

The act of March 3, 1865, authorized the appointment of assistant commissioners to aid the Commissioner in supervising the work of the Bureau in the States. In September 1865, Brig. Gen. Edgar M. Gregory took command as Assistant Commissioner in Texas. In a circular issued by Commissioner Howard in July 1865, the assistant commissioners were instructed to designate one officer in each State to serve as "General Superintendents of Schools." These officials were to "take cognizance of all that is being done to educate refugees and freedmen, secure proper protection to schools and teachers, promote method and efficiency, correspond with the benevolent agencies which are supplying his field, and aid the Assistant Commissioner in making his required reports." In October 1865 some centralized control was established over the educational activities of the Bureau in the States with the appointment of Rev. John W. Alvord as Inspector of Finances and Schools. In January 1867, Alvord was divested of the financial responsibilities and was redesignated General Superintendent of Education.

The educational activity of the Bureau in Texas began officially with the appointment of E. M. Wheelock as Superintendent of Schools in October 1865. Wheelock served until February 1867, when he became Inspector of Schools, a position he held until June 1867. In March 1867, Lt. I. P. Kirkman became Superintendent of Schools while simultaneously serving as Acting Assistant Adjutant General to the Assistant Commissioner in Texas. In October 1867, Lt. Charles Garretson, the Acting Assistant Adjutant General and Acting Assistant Quartermaster for the Bureau in Texas, also assumed the office then generally referred to as the Superintendent of Education. Wheelock again served as Superintendent from November 1867 to April 1868, when he was succeeded in office by Rev. Joseph Welch. E. C. Bartholomew was Acting Superintendent during Welch's frequent absences from office in 1869 and 1870. Following Louis Stevenson's tenure as Superintendent from March to July 1870, Bartholomew assumed the office and remained until all Bureau officers were withdrawn from Texas in December 1870.

The Superintendent of Education served under the Assistant Commissioner as a staff officer. Subordinate to both the Assistant Commissioner and the Superintendent of Education were the assistant superintendents, or subassistant commissioners as they later became known, who commanded the local field offices into which the State was divided for administrative purposes. Subassistant commissioners supervised all Bureau activities, including education, in their respective areas and reported on educational matters to both the Superintendent of Education and the Assistant Commissioner. After January 1869, the subassistant commissioners were withdrawn from Texas in accordance with the act of July 25, 1868. Subsequently, a few local superintendents of schools (or assistant superintendents of education) were appointed to head the field offices. However, the majority of teachers, who had reported to the subassistant commissioners for their subdistricts before 1869, then reported directly to the Superintendent of Education.

The schools maintained by the Bureau in Texas included day schools for children, night schools for adults, and Sunday schools for both groups. The school regulations devised by the Office of the Superintendent of Education specified that reading, writing, and arithmetic were studies of greatest importance for freedmen; these subjects received the greatest emphasis in most Bureau schools. Teachers were recruited from the local white population, from among the freedmen themselves, and from the North by freedmen's aid societies. In 1867, Assistant Commissioner Joseph Kiddoo concluded an agreement with the American Missionary Association that would provide the schools with teachers in Texas.

The Bureau's responsibility for education included the establishment and maintenance of schools and the examination and appointment of teachers. Bureau funds were used to pay teachers' salaries and provide for their transportation, for the construction and repair of school buildings, and for the rent of properties used for educational purposes. Private organizations and individuals were also involved in establishing and financing freedmen's schools in Texas. A number of these schools were established upon the initiative of local whites and freedmen, although subsequently they were given direction and support by the Bureau. The American Missionary Association provided some of the pay for teachers it recruited, and salaries were partially subsidized by contributions from the freedmen. Bureau policy dictated that, wherever possible, subscriptions be solicited from freedmen for establishing schools and that tuition be charged for each student in attendance.

GENERAL RECORDKEEPING PRACTICES

The Superintendent of Education reported to and corresponded with Commissioner Howard and General Superintendent Alvord in Washington and the Assistant Commissioner concerning educational progress and conditions in Texas. In addition, the Superintendent corresponded with and received reports from subordinate officers and teachers in the field. He also corresponded with aid societies, particularly the American Missionary Association, regarding their contributions to the educational effort in the state.

The correspondence of the Superintendent of Education was handled in accordance with typical 19th-century recordkeeping practices. Fair copies of outgoing letters were transcribed in letter books. Replies to incoming letters were frequently written on the letters themselves or on specially prepared wrappers. The replies, known as endorsements, were also copied into volumes; the endorsed letter was then returned to the sender or forwarded to another office. Incoming correspondence was also frequently entered in registers of letters received. In addition to a summary of the contents of the incoming letters, the registers usually included such relevant information as the name and sometimes the office of the writer, the date of receipt, the date of the communication, the place of origin, and the entry number assigned at the time of receipt. The registered letters were folded for filing, generally in three segments, and the information recorded in the registers was transcribed on the outside flap of the documents. Letters sent and registers of letters received were frequently indexed, although not usually by subject. The entries consist primarily of references to names of correspondents.

The volumes reproduced in this publication were originally arranged by type of record and thereunder in sequence by volume number. Originally no numbers were assigned to series consisting of single volumes; later all volumes were arbitrarily assigned numbers by the Adjutant General's Office of the War Department after the records passed into its custody. In this microfilm publication the set of numbers last assigned are in parentheses and are useful as an aid in identifying the volumes. In some volumes there are blank numbered pages that have not been filmed.

Names and Subject Terms

This collection is indexed in the online catalog of the Smithsonian Institution under the following terms:

Subjects:

American South
Freedmen's Bureau
Reconstruction, U.S. history, 1865-1877

Slaves -- Emancipation

Container Listing

Series 1: Letters and Endorsements Sent

Scope and Contents: The two volumes of letters and endorsements sent, May 15–November 29, 1867, and April 27, 1869–December 17, 1870, are generally arranged chronologically, and each volume contains a name index. Since the index to volume 2 (6) is badly water stained and partially illegible, the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) has prepared a typed copy that has been filmed directly following the original. Illegible entries have been supplied and the arrangement has been perfected.

The arrangement and content of the letters and endorsements vary somewhat in each volume. In volume 1 (15) the first 49 pages are arranged with letters sent on the left-hand pages and endorsements on the right-hand pages. The entries that constitute each type of correspondence are numbered consecutively in separate numbering systems. Sometimes a number is preceded by the initial letter of the recipient's surname. Some of the letters sent in volume 1 (15), appear to be abstracts rather than complete transcriptions of the outgoing documents. The endorsements merely contain the information recorded by the Superintendent of Education in forwarding the letters but no data concerning the nature of the incoming correspondence itself.

In volume 2 (6), the endorsements are interfiled with the letters sent according to date, and all entries have been numbered consecutively. In addition to letters sent, volume 2 (6) also includes semiannual reports of July 15, 1869, and January 6, 1870, and an annual report of June 30, 1870, to the Superintendent of Education in Washington, D. C. Some of the letters in volume 2 (6) were evidently sent to a number of individuals with few, if any, changes. In these instances only the initial letter was transcribed. However, the additional recipients were listed and deviations from the original text, if any, were noted. The endorsements entered in volume 2 (6) include a brief identification of the incoming letter and related copies of previous endorsements in addition to the endorsement sent by the Superintendent of Education.

The entries in volume 2 (6) bear frequent marginal reference symbols to related letters sent also found therein and to incoming letters entered in the corresponding register of letters received. Letters sent are referred to as "L. S." followed by the appropriate page number and also by a fractional symbol. The numerator of the fraction refers to previous correspondence and the denominator to subsequent correspondence with the same individual. Incoming correspondence is noted by the symbol "L. R." (Letters Received) followed by the page number in the register or the file number of the letter itself. A number of letters sent to Commissioner Howard bear the marginal notation "Filed in T." This means that the original letter was endorsed back to the Superintendent of Education from the Commissioner's Office and then under "T" for Texas among the unregistered correspondence.

1.1: Volume 1 (15), May–Nov. 1867

[Image\(s\)](#)

1.2: Volume 2 (6), Apr. 1869–Dec. 1870

[Image\(s\)](#)

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Series 2: Registers of Letters Received

Scope and Contents: The entries in the two volumes of registers of letters received, November 1866–December 1870, are generally arranged by time period, thereunder alphabetically by the initial letter of the correspondent's surname, and thereunder chronologically by date of receipt. Volume 2 (3) has a name index. NARA prepared a name index to volume 1 (14) that has been filmed first. Since the pages in volume 1 (14) are unnumbered, the index references are to entry numbers.

Some inconsistencies in arrangement should be noted. In volume 1 (14) entries within alphabetical headings are frequently not in strict chronological sequence by date of receipt. Some entry numbers in both volumes are repeated twice in succession. NARA added [No. 1] and [No. 2] beside the appropriate entries in the registers and to the file citations on the corresponding letters to distinguish between the duplicated numbers. Some of the entries in volume 1 (14) were inadvertently left unnumbered. NARA supplied the missing numbers in brackets where they would normally appear. In the second register the number of pages allotted to alphabetical headings proved insufficient in several instances and the entries were continued elsewhere in the volume. NARA filmed the entries in correct sequence.

Both volumes contain marginal references to related letters sent and registered letters received that are similar to those in the volumes of letters sent. However, some citations in volume 1 (14) appear to refer to a volume (or Volumes) of letters sent that are no longer among the records of the Superintendent of Education. Other entries in volume 1 (14) bear the notation "Ex.," meaning that the document filed among the registered letters received is an extract of the original manuscript.

Some correspondence entered in the registers is no longer to be found among the series of registered letters received. The missing letters may have been forwarded to Bureau headquarters in Washington or to subordinate offices in Texas. NARS has placed an asterisk (*) in the register near the writer's name for each letter that is still in the series of registered letters received.

2.1: Volume 1 (14), Nov. 1866–Dec. 1867

[Image\(s\)](#)

2.2: Volume 2 (3), Jan. 1868–Dec. 1870

[Image\(s\)](#)

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Series 3: Letters Received

Scope and Contents: Most of the letters received are in the registered series, but there is also a small series of unregistered correspondence.

3.1: Registered Letters Received

Scope and Contents: The registered letters received, November 1866–December 1870, are arranged in accordance with the order of entries in volumes 1 (14) and 2 (3) of the registers of letters received. Some earlier letters have no file numbers recorded on the outside flaps, but NARA has supplied the missing citations in brackets for the corresponding entries in the first register. This series also includes telegrams and narrative reports received from subassistant commissioners and teachers relating to activities of particular schools or educational conditions in general. Filed under "R" for 1868 are extracts of subassistant commissioners' reports pertaining to school matters that were forwarded to the Superintendent of Education by Assistant Commissioner Joseph J. Reynolds.

3.1.1: Register 1, 1866-1867

3.1.1.1: A – L

[Image\(s\)](#)

[Image\(s\)](#)

[Image\(s\)](#)

3.1.1.2: M – Y

[Image\(s\)](#)

[Image\(s\)](#)

[Image\(s\)](#)

3.1.2: Register 2, 1868-1870

3.1.2.1: A – G

[Image\(s\)](#)

[Image\(s\)](#)

[Image\(s\)](#)

[Image\(s\)](#)

3.1.2.2: H – M

[Image\(s\)](#)

[Image\(s\)](#)

[Image\(s\)](#)

[Image\(s\)](#)

3.1.2.3: N – R

[Image\(s\)](#)

[Image\(s\)](#)

[Image\(s\)](#)

[Image\(s\)](#)

3.1.2.4: S

[Image\(s\)](#)

[Image\(s\)](#)

[Image\(s\)](#)

3.1.2.5: T – Z

[Image\(s\)](#)

[Image\(s\)](#)

3.2: Unregistered Letters Received, (bulk 1866–67 and 1869–70)

[Image\(s\)](#)

[Image\(s\)](#)

[Image\(s\)](#)

[Image\(s\)](#)

[Image\(s\)](#)

Scope and
Contents:

The unregistered letters received, January 1866–December 1867 and May 1869–June 1870, are arranged by year, thereunder alphabetically by the initial letter of the correspondent's surname, and thereunder chronologically. A typed name index has been prepared by NARA. Some letters for early 1866 appear to have been entered in a register that is no longer among the records of the Superintendent of Education. A number of documents for 1866 and 1867 consist of extracts of letters found in the registered series. The letters for 1869 and 1870 consist primarily of correspondence sent by the Superintendent of Education to Commissioner Howard; they were subsequently endorsed back to the Superintendent. There are also a few undated letters that follow those for 1870.

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Series 4: Monthly Form Reports

Scope and Contents: Among the records of the Superintendent of Education are four unbound series of monthly reports prepared on forms. There are reports received by the Superintendent from teachers and subassistant commissioners and retained copies of reports sent by him to Bureau headquarters in Washington. The latter consist of school reports, reports of school buildings, and reports of persons and articles hired.

4.1: Monthly Reports from Teachers and Subassistant Commissioners

Scope and Contents: The monthly reports from teachers and subassistant commissioners, October 1865–July 1870, are arranged chronologically by month. The series consists primarily of the teachers' reports, and there are no reports from subassistant commissioners until February 1868. There are no reports of any kind for January 1868, and for the next two months there are only subassistant commissioners' reports. For the period March–December 1868, there are both subassistant commissioners' and teachers' reports, with the latter occasionally filed as enclosures to the former. For the period January 1869–July 1870, the series consists mostly of teachers' reports, but there are also a few reports from local district Superintendents of Education.

The forms used for teachers' reports contained the school regulations that were devised in the Office of the Superintendent of Education. The forms also required statistical data relating to the number of pupils enrolled, attendance, and subjects taught in day, night, and Sunday schools. The amount of tuition paid by the students was also to be specified, and space was allowed for narrative remarks by the teacher. During the years of the Bureau's operation in Texas, minor changes were periodically made in the forms, but the format and content remained essentially the same.

Some of the reports apparently pertain to non–Bureau schools. The subassistant commissioners' and district superintendents' reports requested information concerning the number and types of schools in each subdistrict, the number of teachers, the number of schoolhouses and their conditions, the need for additional schools and the ability of freedmen to support them, public sentiment toward the education of freedmen and poor whites, the need for northern charitable aid, and other matters concerning the schools in the area.

4.1.1: Monthly Reports from Teachers and Subassistant Commissioners, 1865–Apr. 1867

[Image\(s\)](#)

[Image\(s\)](#)

[Image\(s\)](#)

[Image\(s\)](#)

4.1.2: Monthly Reports from Teachers and Subassistant Commissioners, May 1867–Mar. 1868

[Image\(s\)](#)

[Image\(s\)](#)

[Image\(s\)](#)

4.1.3: Monthly Reports from Teachers and Subassistant Commissioners, Apr.–Sept. 1868

[Image\(s\)](#)

[Image\(s\)](#)

[Image\(s\)](#)

4.1.4: Monthly Reports from Teachers and Subassistant Commissioners, Oct. 1868–May 1869

[Image\(s\)](#)[Image\(s\)](#)[Image\(s\)](#)[Image\(s\)](#)

4.1.5: Monthly Reports from Teachers and Subassistant Commissioners, June 1869–Apr. 1870

[Image\(s\)](#)[Image\(s\)](#)[Image\(s\)](#)[Image\(s\)](#)[Image\(s\)](#)

4.1.6: [Monthly Reports from Teachers and Subassistant Commissioners, May–July 1870](#)

4.2: State Superintendent of Education's Monthly School Reports, Jan. 1866–May 1870

[Image\(s\)](#)

Scope and Contents: The State Superintendent of Education's monthly school reports, January 1866–May 1870, are arranged chronologically. Evidently compiled from reports submitted by teachers and subassistant commissioners, they contain similar information consolidated for the state as a whole. The reports for January–May 1866, are narrative. For the period January–April 1869, there are also reports of schools, teachers, and buildings that were requested in Commissioner Howard's circular letter of October 6, 1868. These reports list the names of teachers and their patrons and the number of buildings and their owners. For the months of October and November 1868, December 1869, and January 1870, there are lists of teachers showing the locations of their schools and the owners of the school buildings. Filed at the end of the 1869 reports is a list of freedmen's schools that had been compelled to suspend their operations for lack of means.

4.3: Monthly Reports of School Buildings, July 1869–Apr. 1870

[Image\(s\)](#)

Scope and Contents: The monthly reports of school buildings, July 1869–April 1870, are arranged chronologically and contain information on both Bureau and non–Bureau edifices. The available data for each building consists of its location; physical composition, condition, and value; and the owner and value of the land upon which it was situated.

4.4: Monthly Reports of Persons and Articles Hired, May 1869–June 1870

[Image\(s\)](#)

Scope and Contents: The monthly reports of persons and articles hired, May 1869–June 1870, are arranged chronologically and were used to compile consolidated reports that were forwarded to Bureau headquarters in Washington. This series of reports pertains primarily to the leasing

of school buildings and offices and the payment of civilian teachers, agents, officials, clerks,
and contractors.

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Series 5: Miscellaneous Records

Scope and Contents: The miscellaneous records relating to schools, teachers, and Bureau educational expenditures consist of unbound teachers' letters of appointment, unbound "Articles of Agreement," and seven record books.

The teachers' letters of appointment, 1867–69, are arranged chronologically. The series consists of retained copies of form letters appointing teachers to their posts. The salary to be paid and the date the appointment was to take effect were specified in the letter.

The series of "Articles of Agreement" (Contracts), February 1867–December 1870, is arranged chronologically by date of transaction. Most of the agreements were made by the Superintendent of Education or subassistant commissioners with private individuals for the construction and repair of Bureau school buildings. Building specifications are frequently available from these documents.

The bound records include a volume entitled "Extracts and Copies of Letters Relative to Schools" (16). These extracts, July 1866–November 1867, are arranged under four subject headings and thereunder chronologically. The subject headings concern the building, repair, organization, and rental of schools. Most, if not all, of the correspondence from which the extracts were made appears to have been entered in Volume 1 (14) of the registers of letters received, and many of the letters themselves may be located among the registered letters received. In contrast to the entries in the registers, which consist of short summaries of incoming correspondence, the extracts are fair copies of all or portions of the letters.

There are three volumes consisting primarily of lists of teachers and schools. A "Record of Teachers" (19), October 1865–February 1868, is arranged by the initial letter of the teacher's surname. Information recorded for each teacher includes the location of his assignment, the date of his appointment, the rate of compensation, the authority that commissioned him, and the date of his resignation. In the front of this volume is an undated list of teachers commissioned by the American Missionary Association showing their duty assignments and indicating the rate of turnover. A "School Record" (21) includes a similar listing of teachers that is largely unarranged in format and covers the period October 1865–November 1867. The volume also contains a list of teachers who had submitted their school reports for May 1867; unarranged abstracts of correspondence and reports received from teachers and subassistant commissioners, June 1866–May 1867; and another listing of teachers, May 1866–April 1867, arranged chronologically by month and thereunder by location. The latter was evidently compiled from the teachers' school reports and contains similar statistical information about student attendance and courses of instruction. A volume entitled "Record of Schools" (22), January 1866–August 1867, is arranged by the counties in which teachers were stationed and thereunder chronologically by month. The teachers' names are listed with the towns in which they taught. There are also attendance statistics for each teacher that were compiled from their school reports.

The three remaining volumes pertain largely to Bureau educational expenditures in Texas. The first volume is entitled "School Houses Rented and Repaired" (17), January 1867–January 1868, and is arranged alphabetically by the counties in which school buildings were located. Information about leased buildings includes the names of owners, the amount of rent paid, the length of leases, and the names of renters. Information about building repairs includes a brief description of the nature of the work, the name of the contracting Bureau official, the date of the contract, and the amount of Bureau funds expended. This volume appears to have been compiled from the unbound series of articles of agreement. The "List of Houses Rented and Teachers Employed" (20), May 1869–June 1870, consists of chronologically arranged lists of vouchers received. The categories covered in these vouchers include house rents, May–December 1869; teachers' salaries, May–December 1869; services of teachers employed by the Bureau, January–June 1870; and houses rented

by the Bureau, January–June 1870. There is also an 1869 "Roll of Teachers" specifying their duty stations. The "Record of Schools" (23) January 1866–September 1869, contains the following chronologically arranged lists: school houses rented by the Bureau, January 1867–September 1869, showing locations, rent per month, and date discontinued; school houses repaired by the Bureau, January 1867–April 1869, showing the location, funds expended, and date of payment; teachers paid by the Bureau, January 1867–September 1869, showing teachers' names, location of duty stations, salary, date paid, and date salary ceased to be paid; and teacher transportation furnished by the Bureau, March 1868–February 1869, showing the names of teachers, the date transportation was furnished, the cost, and the departure and destination points of the journey. This volume also includes a listing of Bureau schools, January 1866–November 1868, arranged chronologically by month. Information available includes the location of the school, the date the school was reported, the name of the teacher, and the number of male and female students enrolled.

5.1: Teachers' Letters of Appointment, 1867–69

[Image\(s\)](#)

5.2: Articles of Agreement (Contracts), Feb. 1867–Dec. 1870

[Image\(s\)](#)

5.3: Extracts and Copies of Letters Relative to Schools (16), July 1866–Nov. 1867

[Image\(s\)](#)

5.4: Record of Teachers (19), Oct. 1865–Feb. 1868

[Image\(s\)](#)

5.5: School Record (21), Oct. 1865–Nov. 1867

[Image\(s\)](#)

5.6: Record of Schools (22), Jan. 1866–Aug. 1867

[Image\(s\)](#)

5.7: School Houses Rented and Repaired (17), Jan. 1867–Jan. 1868

[Image\(s\)](#)

5.8: Lists of Houses Rented and Teachers Employed (20), May 1869–June 1870

[Image\(s\)](#)

5.9: Record of Schools (23), Jan. 1866–Sept. 1869

[Image\(s\)](#)

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