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*Correspondence from the American Revolution and the Early United States:
The Blackden-Stoddard Letters (Conclusion)*

Shelfmark

California State University, Fullerton (CSUF).

University Archives and Special Collections.

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War Memorabilia Collection.

Durkee/Blackden Correspondence.

Mostly undated (July 14, [1779], to early 1800s).

Seven letters (numbered 25 to 31 below).

Introduction

The seven letters edited below were donated in 1973 by Miss Florence Durkee of Brea, California, to CSUF's University Archives and Special Collections, where they are part of the "Durkee/Blackden Correspondence" in the "War Memorabilia Collection." They are in relatively good condition, however, there are a few holes and tears in their yellow paper stationery. Letter 28 is a fragment, and the final page of letter 29 (a "memorial" addressed to the U.S. Congress) is missing. Only letter 25 is dated (July 14, most likely 1779); all other letters are either undated or missing the year. Only letter 25 (written in White Plains, New York) and letter 27 (written in New York, New York) contain unambiguous information as to where they were written. For the editions of letters 1-24 from this same collection, as well as additional contextual information, see volumes 46 (2019) and 47 (2020) of *The Welebaethan: A Journal of History*.

The contents of these letters provide fascinating insights into North America's history during and after the Revolutionary War—from the perspective of members of the Blackden-Stoddard family and their acquaintances. Letter 25 is a letter by Josiah Stoddard to his sister Sally Blackden, presumably written shortly before the battle of Stony Point (July 16, 1779). Letter 26, written by Josiah Stoddard or Samuel Blackden (the aforementioned Sally's husband), makes reference to a payment that is eagerly being awaited. Letter 27, presumably written by Sally Blackden to her sister Lydia Eldredge, details the situation of their ailing mother. Letter 28 is the fragment of a love letter, presumably written by Samuel Blackden to Sally Blackden. Letter 29 is Samuel Blackden's "memorial" addressed to the U.S. Congress, in which he details the services rendered by him during the American Revolutionary War, for which he has yet to be properly compensated. In letter 30, Samuel Blackden writes to his wife Sally while he is being kept from traveling home by a storm. Letter 31 is a letter addressed to Sally Blackden by an unidentified female acquaintance who is musing about the question of remarrying after the death of her husband.

The transcriptions below preserve the lines, spelling, and capitalization of the original letters. Any additions are enclosed by square brackets. Loss and illegible deletions are indicated by three dots enclosed by square brackets.

Edition: Letter 25, Jos[iah] Stoddard to Sally Blackden, July 14, 1779, White Plains, [New York]

Front:

White Plains¹ July 14 1779 [?]²
 Dear Sally³ -
 Col[onel] Blackden,⁴ the moment Mr Prime⁵
 arrived at our Camp[,] was Oblig[e]d to go
 [to] head Quarters[;] desired Me to say
 how d'ye for him - I am going on [to]
 Command Myself & can only say we
 are quite will [= well] & happy Gen[era]l. Washington⁶
 Crosses Hudsons River⁷ today & tomorrow[.]
 Something will soon be done -
 I am in the Utmost haste - My
 Love to all - Yours
 Jos[iah]. Stoddard⁸

Back: [traces of red wax seal] [modern hand, pencil] 10, From Jos. Stoddard, July 14 - 1770 [sic], From White Plains

Mrs Sally Blackden
 Salisbury⁹

Edition: Letter 26, [Josiah Stoddard or Samuel Blackden?] to [recipient unknown], May 25, [year unknown], "Camp" [location unknown]

Front left: [traces of red wax seal] [modern hand, pencil] 5, From Camp, May 25

Hon[ere]d by
 Dr. Townsend¹⁰

¹ Location in New York state, east of the Hudson River.

² Based on the letter's contents, the year is probably 1779, just prior to the battle of Stony Point (July 16, 1779) during the American Revolutionary War.

³ Sally Blackden (née Stoddard), the sister of the letter's author, Josiah Stoddard.

⁴ Presumably Samuel Blackden, Sally's husband.

⁵ Unknown person.

⁶ George Washington (1732-1799), first U.S. president (1789-1797).

⁷ River in New York state.

⁸ Josiah Stoddard, the brother of the letter's addressee, Sally Blackden (née Stoddard).

⁹ Presumably Salisbury, Connecticut.

¹⁰ Unknown person.

Marlbro'
Massachusetts¹¹

Front right:

D[ea]r. Sir -
Camp May 25th
By last Post I acknowledged
the receipt of your papers, and gave
you a description of our situation.
No alteration has as yet taken place,
and God knows how long I shall be
kept in this disagreeable State of
Suspense - Doctor Townshend, whom
I beg leave to introduce to you,
can acquaint you particularly
with every thing relative to the
Army - The only inducement I
have to continuing a moment
longer is the prospect of receiving
a Sum of money on our c[a]s[e]. [?] being

Back left:

dismissed, for I am most heartily
disgusted with my situation -
Please to remember me
affectionat[e]ly [affectionally?] to my Aunt & the
rest of the Family, and believe
me to be with perfect Esteem
D[ea]r. Sir Y[ou]r. Ob[e]die[n]t
[illegible flourished initials, perhaps Std = Stoddard? or SB = Samuel Blackden?]

Back right: [blank]

*Edition: Letter 27, [Sally Blackden?] to Lydia Eldredge,
June 23, [year unknown], New York, [New York]*

Front right:

June 23d New York
My dear Sister
Since put[t]ing your letter into
the Post Office I hav[e] a letter from Mr and
Mrs Barlow¹² requesting me to set off

¹¹ Marlborough, location in Massachusetts.

¹² Presumably a reference to Joel Barlow (1754-1812), an American diplomat, and his wife.

Immediately for Washington¹³ that is to
 make them a Visit ~~prø~~ [deletion] for two or three or
 Six months provided the embargo¹⁴ shou[l]d
 not be taken off which for the present
 prevents me from going to Curraçoa [Curaçao]¹⁵ – my
 extreme dependant Situation leaves me
 no alternative I am obliged to go [.] Shall
 Set of on Monday next – and shall
 return when I can do better perhaps in
 two months – I regret very much that I
 Cannot see you before I go and that I
 shall be at such a distance from our
 Mother [.] she is becoming very weak and
 feeble and requires constant care and

Back left:

attention [.] I had a severe tryal in my
 Last visit to her I took my bed with
 me and staid in the house with her
 fur [= for] near four weeks – I washed and
 I canned and made and mended fur [= for] her
 till I got her quite comfortable [.]
 Richard Stoddard¹⁶ give [= gave] her some money
 which she had prudence enough to lay out
 in wheat and tea sugar and such things
 is [= as] she wanted [.] I added somthings in shant [?]
 I have done all I can do for the present
 she has striped me – they have now some
 grains of various sorts coming on they have
 Butter and cheese [,] Indians [?] meal and some
 flour [,] and I cannot help thinking they
 may get thro[ugh] another winter tolarably
 comfortable – if you can [,] and I am sure you
 will if possible send her two pairs of
 soft coarse woolen stockings and another
 Patticoat [= petticoat] and old one is just is [=as] good as
 a new one [.] I ask[e]d mother how

¹³ Washington, D.C.

¹⁴ In the context of the American Revolutionary War, there were several embargoes in place, for example, a British embargo preventing American trade with the West Indies.

¹⁵ Curaçao, Caribbean island.

¹⁶ Presumably a relative of the letter's author and addressee.

Back right:

Capt[ain] Holmes¹⁷ behaved [.] she told me he
 Behaved is [= as] well is [= as] any body that was
 Born in the old Country that was almost
 a natural fool - your letter is to be
 answered and highly & [?] [to] your satisfaction [.]
 they want to see you and Olive¹⁸ very much [.]
 Mother told me Olive wou[l]d put up with
 anything and live any way - she seem[e]d
 pleas[e]d howiver [= however] at last that I took all the work
 upon myself and cook for Holmes which
 By the way I had rather provide fur [= for] Gen [?]
 B [hole in paper] but on the whole we did pretty well
 and mother was very much pleas[e]d to have
 talk to Holmes and tell him that she
 must do no more work [.] I knew she
 allways hated work and that she now
 felt unable to do anything - indeed I
 saw in my mother my own helpless
 situation when a child and what she had
 done fur [= for] me when unable to do fur [= for] my
 self wis [= was] now dice [= nowadays] to her and most

Front left: [traces of red wax seal] [modern hand, pencil] June 23, From New York
 [stamp: PAID] [stamp: NEW YORK JUN 23] [different hand] BB [Betsey Bennet?]
 Beuly [?] [scribbled] Another letter [?]

20

willingly wou[l]d I devote my time to
 her if I cou[l]d [.] Love to your Family
 and am affectionally yours
 SB - [= Sally Blackden?]
 tell Lydia¹⁹ and Polly²⁰
 to write me to New York is [= as] usual on Betsey
 Bennet²¹ [.] one letter will do [.] Postage is expensive
 Love to Mrs Staunton²² and tell her

¹⁷ Unknown person.

¹⁸ Presumably a relative of the letter's author and addressee.

¹⁹ Presumably a relative of the letter's author and addressee.

²⁰ Presumably a relative of the letter's author and addressee.

²¹ Unknown person.

²² Unknown person.

I have nothing yet worth writing
about
Mrs. Lydia Eldredge²³
Burlington²⁴
Vermont

*Edition: Letter 28, [Samuel Blackden?] to Sally [Blackden],
[date unknown], [location unknown]*

Front: [missing portion at the top, subsequent 14 line-endings on this page cut off at the right; missing portion at the bottom]

[...]

I must confess that The Reas[on I ...]
write you particularly of my Illness was [not to ...]
make you any way weary with The Fr[iend ...]
you had so long Neglected – [?] as offers [...?]
Appearances Let me ask my D[ear] Girl Wh[at ...]
Imagine [...] yours or [...]
of Writing and you Neglecting Think – [...]
However no scolding; Let us [...]
Strive to Render our lives agreable by always [...]
everything that may ad[d] to each others happynes[s] [...]
you and Rain one Smile on That Lovely Fa[ce ...]
more delight than The Applause of Thousands [...]
by Dr. Wheeler²⁵ Who will be here in a few Days . [...]
I may that a Moment to Come to Salisbury²⁶ – [...]
With what pleasure do I set [sit?] down to perform my promise to My
Lovely Sally!²⁷ to Repeat to her my sincere Wishes for her Health
Happiness and Contentment During my Absense which shall
not be longer than Necessity absolutely Requires, When I will
with the Blessing of Heaven Return to my Charmer, with
A Heart Running over with Transport and Extacy!, and
Crown our Mutual Wishes with Glowing Ardor – .
And Now Let me remind [m]y Sally, of her promise
[...]

Back: [modern hand, pencil] 31 [traces of red wax seal]

²³ The sister of the letter's author.

²⁴ Location in Vermont.

²⁵ Unknown person.

²⁶ Presumably Salisbury, Connecticut.

²⁷ Presumably Sally Blackden, the letter's addressee.

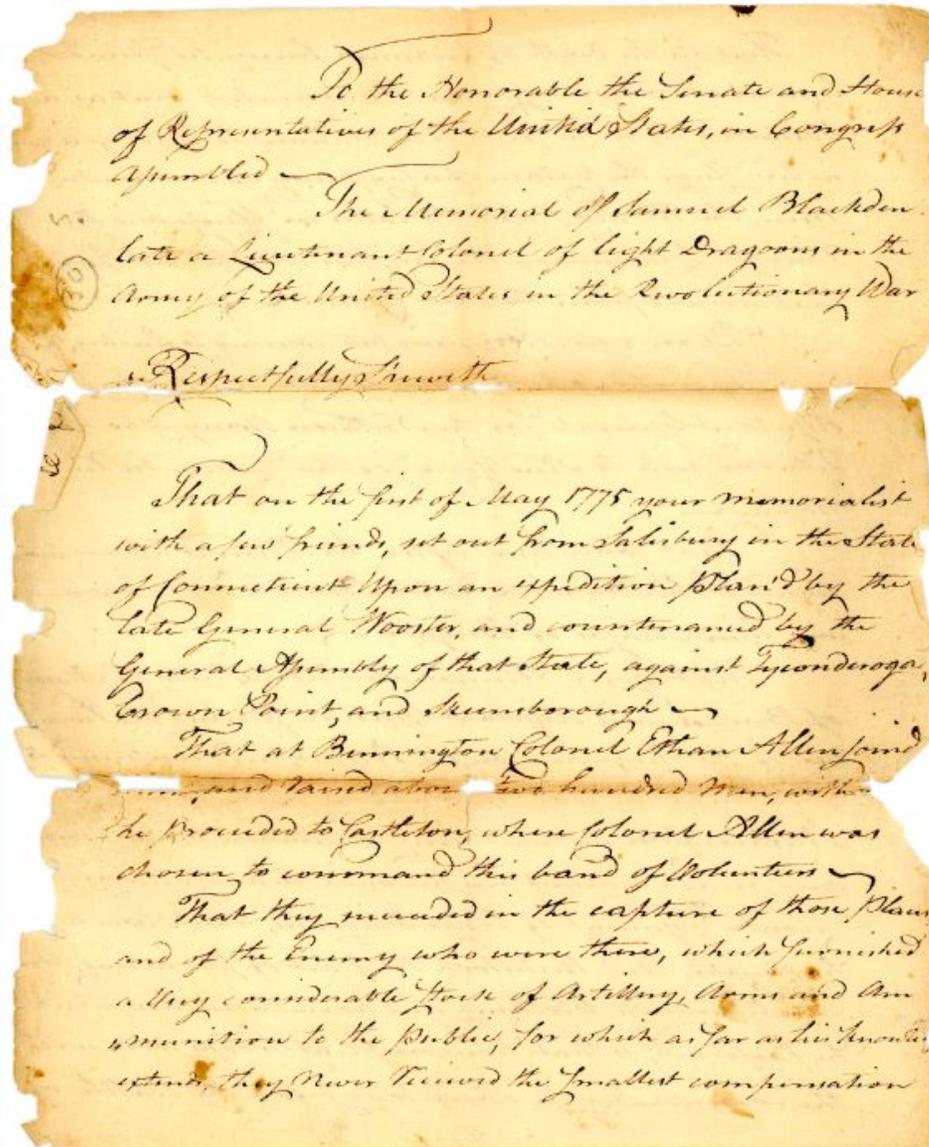


Figure 1: Letter 29, Samuel Blackden to the U.S. Congress, page 1.

Edition: Letter 29, Samuel Blackden to the U.S. Congress, [before January 11, 1802], [location unknown]

Page 1:

To the Honorable the Senate and House
of Representatives of the United States, in Congress
assembled –
The Memorial of Samuel Blackden²⁸
late a Lieutenant Colonel of light Dragoons in the

²⁸ According to *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, vol. 36 (December 1, 1801, to March 3, 1802), 274, Samuel Blackden died before January 11, 1802, when his widow Sarah Blackden continued his petitions.

Army of the United States in the Revolutionary War
Respectfully Sheweth

That on the first of May 1775 your memorialist²⁹
with a few friends, set out from Salisbury in the Stat[e]
of Connecticut Upon an expedition Plan'[ne]d by the
late General Wooster,³⁰ and countenanced by the
General Assembly of that State, against Tyconderoga,³¹
Crown Point,³² and Skeensborough³³ -

That at Bennington³⁴ Colonel Ethan Allen³⁵ join[e]d
[them] [...], and raised abov[e] two hundred men, with [whom]
he proceeded to Castleton,³⁶ where Colonel Allen was
chosen to command this band of Volunteers -

That they succeeded in the capture of those Places
and of the Enemy who were there, which furnished
a Very considerable stock of artillery, arms and am[-]
munition to the Public, for which as far as his knowled[ge]
extends, they never received the smallest compensation

Page 2:

That on the death of his much lamented friend
General Montgomery,³⁷ your memorialist went as a
Volunteer with the first reinforcement to Quebec,³⁸ carrying
in his sleigh the Captain of a Company of one hundred
men, the rest also passed the lakes in sleighs and the
river St. Lawrence³⁹ on the ice, this was the first Party
that arrived from the then Colonies -

Upon your memorialists coming to Quebec, he
[was] [...] Appointed to do the duty of Colonel Flem[in]g,⁴⁰ [...] Adjutant General for the Northern Army who ha[d]
Returned sick to New York, for this service he receiv[ed]

²⁹ Samuel Blackden refers to himself as the "memorialist," i.e., the author of this memorial.

³⁰ David Wooster (1711-1777).

³¹ Ticonderoga, location in New York state.

³² Location in New York state.

³³ Skenesborough (Whitehall), location in New York state.

³⁴ Location in Vermont.

³⁵ Ethan Allen (1738-1789).

³⁶ Location in Vermont.

³⁷ Richard Montgomery (1738-1775).

³⁸ Location in modern-day Canada.

³⁹ St. Lawrence River, between today's Canadian province of Ontario and New York state.

⁴⁰ William Fleming (1727-1795).

no pay –

That some time after he received a Commission signed John Hancock,⁴¹ dated April 4.th 1776. appoin[-]ing him Major of Brigade –

That your memorialist did the duty of Major of Brigade and Adjutant General, during the remain[-]der of the siege and on the retreat, and continued to serve until he was appointed by his Excellency Gen[eral.] Washington without any solicitation on his part and much against his personal interest, Major o[f] Second Regiment of light Dragoons, which commis[sion] he accepted, and undertook the part of procuring, arms accoutrements, clothing and horse furniture, which he perform'[e]d, so that five compleat Troops, were with the Commander in chief long before the Battle of

Page 3:

Brandywine,⁴² and the sixth troop to the northwar[d] with General Gates, –

That after the Battles of Brandwine and Germantow[n]⁴³ when the army hutted at Valley Forge,⁴⁴ the General was pleased to give your memorialist a Commission as Lieutenan[t] Colonel of Cavalry to take rank from the 7.th of April pre[-]ceding, which was then considered as equal to a Colonel of Infantry, and by this Commission to take rank from the Seventh of April preceding, this though of no personal advantage to your memorialist he considers as a Mark of kind attention and of the approbation of his General which he is proud to possess and to cherish –

That in the Summer of 1779. the affairs of the Second Regiment to which your memorialist was attached were in such as situation that he wished to retire, and after a conference and correspondence with the Commander in Chief he received a discharge which accompanies this –

That soon after the Board of War employed your memorialist in the clothing department, in which [he] continued during the War –

So that if your memorialist was not in the fight[-]

⁴¹ John Hancock (1737-1793).

⁴² Fought on September 11, 1777, in Pennsylvania.

⁴³ Fought on October 4, 1777, in Pennsylvania.

⁴⁴ Location in Pennsylvania.

ing department of the Army at the exact time when depreciation of Pay, commutation of half Pay, and donations of land were granted, yet he was more early engaged in the cause of Liberty and independence than many of his comrades, and as laboriously as any to the conclusion of the War, which makes a term of Eight

Page 4:

Eight years and four months, to wit from the taking o[f] Tyconderoga in May 1775 to August 1779. four years and and four months in arms, and four years in the staff department -

At the conclusion of the War having expended more than half his property in the course of his servic[e] your memorialist went to Europe and was out of the way at the time of making application for compe[n] [-] sation for service render[e]d the Unites States [...] ever intend to trouble your Honourable Body on the subject - But an accidental fall has put him Upon crutches for more than six years past whilst the endea[-] vours for effecting a cure, have been attended with much expense without any success -

That in his present crippled situation your memorialist does not conceive any mode of application so proper as a direct one to the justice of the Govern[ment] of his Country who have so liberally voted compen[sation] to Mess[ieur].rs La Fayette⁴⁵ and Kosinsko⁴⁶ -

When your memorialist retired from the Regiment he settled all public accounts, as well as with the Paymaster from who he received 1173 - [former?] dollars balance of Pay which upon faith in the promise of the public he has preserved, and will be found with the Papers accompanying this memorial -

Note: [the document ends here, subsequent pages appear to be missing] [modern hand, pencil] 30

⁴⁵ Gilbert du Motier, Marquis de Lafayette (1757-1834).

⁴⁶ Tadeusz Kościuszko (1746-1817).

*Edition: Letter 30, S[amuel]. Blackden to Sally [Blackden],
[date unknown], "Lovels lower End of Sharon" [Beaver Co., Pennsylvania?]*

Front:

Lovels lower End of Sharon⁴⁷
 Wednesday Afternoon -
 My Dear Sally -
 We are detain[e]d here by the Storm, I am
 Very unhappy to think it shou[l]d happen Just at this distance
 If it had been at home it wou[l]d have been well, but
 Over [?] twenty miles farther on our Road ~~it~~ wou[l]d have suited our
 [...] with the Auditors - however we must submit
 I came away in such hurry that I
 forgot many things I intended to say Respecting business
 but hope you will be able to prepare things for
 Winter Comfortably -
 Aron Owen⁴⁸ is to get out the Manure
 and spread it on the Meadows for ten pounds -
 If you can get any man to help Jacob⁴⁹
 have some wood got home before bad Weather comes
 [i]n - be very careful in saving your pork. don't
 spare salt - If Everrit⁵⁰ [?] has not sent for
 the Hides, lit [= let] Green⁵¹ have them, Capt[ain]. Burhale⁵² will
 Weigh them and Give you the Weight -
 You shall hear from me in a few days
 in the Mean time Heavens preserve you -
 S. Blackden

Back: [modern hand, pencil] Lowls, lower end of [Sh]aron, [t]o Sally, [fr]om S.
 Blagden, 11 or 12

*Edition: Letter 31, [author unknown] to Sally Blackden,
[date unknown], "No. 32 Courtland Street" [location unknown]*

Front left: [blank, traces of red wax seal]

Front right: [traces of red wax seal]

No. 32 Courtland Street

You have frequently observ[e]d to me my Dear Mrs. Blackden

⁴⁷ Presumably a location in Beaver Co., Pennsylvania.

⁴⁸ Unknown person.

⁴⁹ Unknown person.

⁵⁰ Unknown person.

⁵¹ Unknown person.

⁵² Unknown person.

that you thought me unhappy – I felt a delicacy in telling you the cause lest you shou[l]d consider it less a grievance than I do – I shou[l]d still continue to conceal it if there was not some probability of redress if I knew who to apply to – My friends with whom I have been living about four years have been extrem[e]ly kind to me – & have forbore urging me to connect myself tho[ugh] I have had one or two elegeble opportunities – one has lately presented which they consider too advantageous to be neglected – he is a man of sense Education & property – but so very unlike the person with whom I have liv[e]d – that it appears to me impossible to reconcile my feelings to such a connection – & were my pecuniary circumstances such as I cou[l]d wish I wou[l]d never do it – but you know my anxiety for my Dear little William,⁵³ – I can sacrafise my own happyness for his benefit & will do it if it is necessary

I have property Mrs. Blackden which wou[l]d enable me to live independent of my friends if it was differently [...] – I have land in Ontario County⁵⁴ worth fifteen hund-[dred] of two thousand dollars – and which is daily growing more valuable – but which if sold now wou[l]d not prehaps [sic] fetch half its value – if I cou[l]d put that in pledge, or sell it to some person who has the property to spare & who wou[l]d not take advantage of my necessity – I cou[l]d get me a small place in some agreeable neighbour[-]hood – where with economy & the interest of one thousand dollars I have in the funds I cou[l]d support myself & child with decency.

Back left: [traces of red wax seal]

I have been thinking – that was I personally acquainted with Mr. Burr⁵⁵ I wou[l]d make known my situation to him – not merely on account of his having “A tear for pittty & a hand for melting charity”⁵⁶ but he was a particular friend of my husbands – I think I have heard you say Mrs. Blackden that you had some acquaintance with him – if you have enough to justify you in making an aplication for me & think there is no impropriety in doint it – I am too well

⁵³ Presumably the son of the letter’s author.

⁵⁴ Location in New York state.

⁵⁵ Unknown person.

⁵⁶ Quote from William Shakespeare’s play *Henry IV: Part 2*, act 4, scene 3, slightly adapted.

convinc'[e]d of your friendship to suppose you need urging –
 If you shou[l]d think proper my Dear Mrs. Bl[ackden] –
 to interest your self in this business – I must beg of you
 not to let him know my name unless he is sure he
 can befriend me – I find that my misfortunes have
 not yet subdued My Pride
 I wou[l]d just hint to you, that this business must be
 done soon if ever – as I have staid in town only to try
 to adopt some plan - & have engag[e]d to give a decisive
 answer by the twentieth of May
 I am willing that you shou[l]d let your husband see
 this, & that you conduct it as you & he may think proper
 with confidence & esteem yours [name cut out]

Back right: [traces of red wax seal] [modern hand, pencil] 16, From –, 32 Courtland
 St., no date

Mrs. Sally Blackden
 No. 260 Pearl street

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