

Letter from the editor

by Chip Kastner

I reached out to our normal contributors on February 13, indicating that I was in pretty dire need of article ideas for this edition of the newsletter. I expected to run something on the Easter Egg Hunt, but beyond that I was pretty short on ideas.

At the time, a former coworker of mine who grew up in China was texting me on a near-daily basis about his anxieties over an outbreak raging through the Chinese city of Wuhan. I rolled my eyes at his apocalyptic predictions, pointing out that people in the past made similar comments about SARS, MERS, swine flu, bird flu and ebola, and none of those outbreaks ended up being as bad as people were predicting. There were only 13 confirmed cases in the United States that day; we had more SARS cases than that back in the early 2000s. Furthermore, it was just starting to look like China's draconian lockdown efforts were going to be effective.

Like many Americans, I was wrong.

Thanks to my Amazon order history, I can trace my panic over COVID-19 to the night of Sunday, March 8th. The reported cases in the United States had jumped to around 500, the stock markets had fallen by about 11% from their peak, and Missouri had just reported its first confirmed case. Lying awake in bed and unable to sleep, I began panic-ordering various supplies. The same thing happened on March 9th. On

March 10th, I started to feel that I had overreacted and tried to cancel some of my orders, but alas, it was too late.

March 12, I think, is the date that panic really started setting into American society as a whole. Sports leagues suspended their seasons, Disneyland closed, cruise lines suspended operations, St. Patrick's Day parades were cancelled, and the stock markets fell by almost 10%. I ordered some more supplies from Amazon, but already the pickings were getting a little slim. Although my March 8th purchases all arrived together on time, the March 12th purchases arrived sporadically and still have yet to all come.

My wife was a little slower than me to worry, although I convinced her to cancel our plans to go to a fish fry on March 13th. On the other hand, she

Cont'd on page 2



Normally well-stocked with pasta, soup and canned meats, this grocery store aisle was empty of almost everything except organic black soybean spaghetti. Photo by Chip Kastner.



In mid-March, the meat section of a local supermarket was picked over of almost everything, except corned beef. Photo by Chip Kastner.

WHAT'S INSIDE

Fairy Garden	3
Helping the Community	4
From the President	5
Wood Restoration	6
St. Louis during WWII	8
Lawn & Garden Awards	9
Francis Park Mystery	10
Road Trips	11
Willmore Park Sign	12
Hobbies and Projects	13
Roses	14
Donna Baringer	15
Block Captains	16

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Letter from the Editor (Cont'd from Page 1)

convinced me to go forward with a planned St. Patrick's Day gathering on March 14th. Half of the people we invited ended up cancelling anyway. When my panic-fueled purchases started to arrive, I was subject to a bit of teasing. She still thinks the purchases were ridiculous, and at least so far, she's right; with a few exceptions, the stores remain well-stocked as I write this.

I debated for a while whether to even put this newsletter together. With so many people getting sick, and so many more people losing their jobs or having their pay cut, and many others stuck at home trying to balance working from home with taking care of their kids, I admit that a neighborhood newsletter seems like a pretty trivial matter. But my hope is that if you find just one thing that makes you smile, or one good idea to help pass the time or cope with the isolating effects of "shelter in place" orders, then it will have been worth it.

Due to the amount of time it takes to lay out, print and ship this newsletter, anything specific that I write now is going to be about four weeks old -- in other words, absurdly outdated--by the time you read this article. For instance, as I write this, there are 123,750 confirmed cases in the United States. But four weeks ago, there were 75. By the time you're reading this, I'm assuming we'll have a better handle on whether we've been able to "flatten the curve" of the pandemic, as they say... or whether cases have continued to grow rapidly.

It's within the realm of possibility that by the time you read this, the number of cases in the St. Louis area have tapered off substantially and many people are giving serious thought to reopening businesses, going back to work, and generally proceeding with life as normal. But it also seems possible that initial efforts to slow the virus' spread haven't worked, additional restrictions are put in place, and people remain largely stuck in their homes for the foreseeable future.

Since we have no way of knowing what will happen, we've written this newsletter with the assumption that daily life will be roughly similar to what it is as I write this: People are still advised to stay at home whenever possible, businesses deemed "non-essential" remain closed, schools and daycares haven't reopened, but you're generally still allowed to buy essential supplies and leave the house.

Time will tell as to whether or not we missed the mark.

Stay safe.



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The artist behind the fairy garden

by Pat Talley

Those hundreds of people circumnavigating Francis Park each day have surely noticed the evolving fairy garden across from the Donovan/Itaska intersection. It started out small, created by one person, and has grown as parkgoers add their own touches to the garden. But who started the garden, you may ask? Its creator is Amy Kidwell, a longtime resident of St. Louis Hills and proprietor of Nest by Sir Robin, a home-grown company specializing in the world of fairies and miniatures.

Amy has been creating fairy gardens around her home since her daughter, now a high school senior, was young. But Amy's interest in fairies goes back to her own childhood, reading of books like *The Borrowers*, *Thumbelina* and *The History of Tom Thumb*, in which the little people use their resourcefulness and imagination to create their own practical small worlds. Like the tiny people in those books, Amy uses everyday objects to create her little worlds. "I love to repurpose things," she says, "so instead of throwing something away I think to myself, what would *The Borrowers* do with this or how could I use this in the fairy garden?" She once found a small glass ashtray and after some thought decided to make it a miniature koi pond. She then made miniature koi and lily pads from bakeable clay to occupy the tiny pond.

Behind her home on Delor is a bubble rock wall dating back to the 1930s that Amy has been filling with tiny objects for the neighborhood children to find. The wall is interactive with treasure hunts, notes left in secret places, hidden objects and other tantalizing gifts left by the fairies. A tree stump in front of Amy's house at the 6500 block of Delor was the first large scale garden. This garden is filled with handmade items made from natural products: a twig ladder, a hammock made from scraps of lace, a broom made from sticks and jute twine. Amy has a large collection of trinkets found at flea markets and estate sales that she uses to populate the fairy wall and gardens.

During a morning run around Francis Park last year, Amy noticed the newly cut tree on Donovan. "That stump was calling me," she says. "My fairy gardens on Delor Street have brought many neighbors joy and I wanted to extend it out to others in St. Louis Hills."

Amy gets great satisfaction from seeing the Francis Park garden grow and the increasing interest in this art form around the neighborhood. She likes the idea that people slow down to look at the garden and to enjoy the little things in the world. Amy says, "I like to remind people of the value of imagination and play at any stage of life." She also enjoys seeing the additions to the garden and the fact that it has become a spontaneous community art project.

To learn more about Amy's creations follow NEST BY SIR ROBIN on Instagram and YouTube. Her creations and kits are available at Garden District STL at 203 South Grand. Amy can be reached at nestbysirrobin@gmail.com.



Top: The fairy garden in Francis Park, at the intersection of Donovan and Itaska, is the work of local artist Amy Kidwell, who has been creating fairy gardens for years. Middle: Many of the structures within the fairy garden are natural materials and repurposed items that might otherwise go to waste. Bottom: Kidwell has been filling the rock wall behind her home with hidden objects and other gifts for local children to find. Photos by Pat Talley.

Apart, but not alone

by Chip Kastner

While grocery stores generally remain well-stocked at the time I write this (hand sanitizer, disinfecting wipes, toilet paper, ground beef and chicken breasts notwithstanding), there are many people in this country and around the world for whom mostly-stocked shelves make no difference; due to the pandemic, they may have suffered illness, job loss, income reduction or quarantine that prevents them from buying food for themselves and their families.

While I realize that a great number of people have had a reduction in income on account of the pandemic, others have remained fortunate thus far. I realize that it's important to take care of your family and prepare for an emergency of your own; however, if you have the means to contribute any additional income to a charitable organization, many of them require help more today than ever.

One such organization is Feeding America (www.feedingamerica.org), a network of 200 food banks and 60,000 food pantries/meal programs that distributed 3.6 billion meals in the United States last year. One of the food banks in their network is the St. Louis Area Foodbank (www.stlfoodbank.org), which supplies 500 partners and programs in 26 counties in and around the St. Louis area. Last year, they distributed 35 million meals in the region. Both organizations have earned a four-star rating (the highest) from Charity Navigator for multiple years running.

Other relevant charities based in the St. Louis area with current four-star ratings from Charity Navigator include Feed My People (www.feed-my-people.org), which provides food, clothing and other services locally; Operation Food Search (www.operationfoodsearch.org), which distributes food and other necessities to 330 partner organizations in and around St. Louis; and United Way of Greater St. Louis (www.helpingpeople.org), which provides funding to over 150 other nonprofit organizations that serve 16 counties in the St. Louis Metropolitan area.

If you are unable to give financial support to a charity during this difficult time, many of these organizations are still in need of volunteers to help provide their community services. If you are comfortable doing so, have no known exposure to COVID-19 and no symptoms, are a low-risk individual and don't have at-risk people in your household, it may be worth considering donating your time to one or more of these organizations in this time of elevated need (subject, of course, to their policies).

If neither of these options are viable given your personal situation, it's also good to take some time to think about the broader impact of your everyday decisions. For example, today I was about to get up on a ladder to clean out my own gutters, thinking it was a perfect way to save money at a time like this. My wife caught me in the act and told me to get down (a friend of a friend fell to their death from their roof in the past, and she loathes the idea of me getting more than a few feet off the

ground on a ladder). Upon further thought, the person who normally cleans out our gutters is a small business owner, and I'm sure his business is hurting due to other customers trying to save money in the same way. Continuing to pay him as usual—so long as I am able—will work towards supporting a small business, and requires no interpersonal contact.

The same goes for the local pest control company who sprays our house for bugs and fills our rodent bait stations; their workers wear masks and stay clear of people in the household. This is also true of the company that services our air conditioner every spring. Many restaurants remain open for carryout and delivery service, and many of these restaurants are small businesses hit particularly hard by the COVID-19 pandemic. The printing of this newsletter supports two local businesses, and also promotes multiple local businesses through ads and neighborhood spotlight articles.

Even little things can help the people around you. About a week ago, my in-laws (who live in Chicago) were faced with more severe toilet paper shortages than we were in St. Louis. I went to the grocery store at 9:30 am on a Tuesday and was able to find a large package to mail to them. However, before I sent it, they managed to find some. Now, I'm stuck with far more toilet paper than my household will use over the next several months. Rather than hoarding it all for myself, we're offering it to friends and family members who might have not been so lucky in having a surplus.

With only two people currently in my household, we sometimes misjudge and buy too many groceries, or cook a recipe that ends up being more than we can possibly eat before it goes bad. Sure, we can freeze some leftovers, but what about our friends and family members who have currently been furloughed, laid off or had their hours cut? Even with increased unemployment checks, they may have a gap in their income that they are struggling to fill. Why not ease the burden by offering leftovers, meals or extra supplies?

Even though the self-isolation from COVID-19 can be lonely, it doesn't mean we're alone. Please keep that in mind during this difficult time.



Toilet paper may be more valuable than gold, but if you find yourself with extra, consider donating it to friends or family who need it. Photo by Chip Kastner.

What if today, we were just grateful for everything?

by Nan Vordtriede, President, SLHNA



"What if today we were just grateful for everything?" This is the caption recently seen attached to a cartoon with Charlie Brown, tightly hugging to the point of squeezing Snoopy to death! Poor Snoopy, he can't get the words out soon enough, "Charlie Brown, we are social

distancing, you know, 6 ft away."

As I struggle to write this article during our time of COVID-19 and social distancing, sadly cancelling all the St. Louis Hills Neighborhood Association events and meetings... daily I am reminded just how yesterday was taken for granted, today we live to the fullest, and tomorrow we take as it comes praying with each other for the best.

But, It's not all negative. As the majority follow the "stay-at-home order," whether it be working, schooling, or worshipping online or remotely in their homes, etc. I have seen even more than before, walkers, joggers, children playing outside, dog walkers, bikers, and all of us as a community together stepping

up to help each other and surrounding businesses (as much as possible).

The creativity on sidewalks via chalk drawers and in windows abounds! We are utilizing our minds! Social media is exploding with those posting how HOME life has a new norm. What?! We are actually having cooked at home meals and dining with each other? Socializing, interesting. Home study, work, worship, and play brings us into a new norm, conversing, teaming, taking pictures and enjoying each other's company? (Well, to a certain point, we all need that break). This reacquainting is rejuvenating and exciting! A rediscovery of how valuable family, friends (from a distance), and relationships just are to us. How all our residents are to the community! We are learning, forcibly it's true, yet nonetheless, it is just plain okay to SLOW down and smell the fresh Spring air and enjoy life.

As we look towards the future when we stand closer to each other, here is a thought I happened to see:

"In the rush to return to normal, use this time to consider which parts of normal are worth rushing back to." -Dave Hollis

We might all look at things just a bit different. Thinking all of you during this time.

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VOLUNTEERS NEEDED! We rely on volunteers for the following events and committees. Please check any which you are able to assist:

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Christmas Tree Lighting | <input type="checkbox"/> Block Captains/Neighborhood Watch |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Easter Egg Hunt | <input type="checkbox"/> Francis Park Cleanup Team |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Gateway Cup Bike Races | <input type="checkbox"/> History Committee |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Holiday Decoration Awards | <input type="checkbox"/> Marketing/Newsletter |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Holiday Party | <input type="checkbox"/> Safety Committee |
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Staying active with wood restoration

by Chip Kastner

We have several leaded windows and doors original to the house in our St. Louis Hills home. Years of amateurish repairs and repaintings left the windows looking weathered, peeling and, frankly, terrible. There appear to be two companies in town that will restore historic woodwork, and the first one I called had a two-year backlog. Fortunately, the second company was only booked out nine months. After months of having parts of our house boarded up while they took our doors and windows back to their shop, the windows and doors look absolutely beautiful.

Around the time that they were doing this, I got to looking at our exterior door and window frames. Also seemingly original to the house, these looked just as bad as the windows. However, restoring the windows and doors was an expensive enough project already, so I decided to tackle the frames myself.

After basically ruining one door frame with a drill-mounted wire brush and another with a belt sander (hey, I never said I was good at this), I realized that there were no easy solutions to stripping 80+ years of paint. I bought some Citristrip (a relatively safe paint stripper) from the hardware store and got to work. Unfortunately, it seemed to remove only a single layer of paint at a time, and as I quickly discovered, there were half a dozen layers of white, cream, and mint-green paint on the frames.

After doing some research, I found that methylene chloride-based paint strippers are apparently more potent, so I bought a can from the store. After getting some on my skin (twice!)—not a pleasant experience—I decided that it was perhaps made for someone less clumsy than myself. It was probably for the best; I later learned that prolonged exposure has been linked to lung, liver and pancreatic cancer in lab animals, and it kills several people each year from inhalation. Fortunately, between the time that I undertook this project and the present day, it's been banned by the EPA for use in paint strippers made for consumer use.

Growing despondent, I asked the people restoring our windows and doors what they used, and was surprised that the answer was heat guns. I asked them, "What about lead paint?" and was told that lead vaporizes at 1,100 degrees Fahrenheit; heat guns operating at a lower temperature don't release toxic lead fumes. (Stinky fumes are another matter.) Armed with an appropriate heat gun and a respirator mask, I took to finishing the job. It was still far from easy, but the heat gun and putty knife definitely did a much better job at paint removal than every other solution I tried.

Following what the professionals advised, I coated the stripped and sanded frames with a layer of oil-based primer and two coats of latex-based paint. Nobody is going to be paying me for the quality of work I did, but it certainly looks better than it did before. It was a satisfying project, but I had my fill of wood



Top: Years of deferred maintenance left these windows with peeling paint and weathered wood. Bottom: The results of the window restoration were definitely worth the wait. Photos by Chip Kastner.

restoration for a good long while.

But not forever.

I've had two old pieces of family furniture lying around the house for awhile: An old "hope chest" that belonged to my wife's great-grandmother, and a rocking chair that my mom bought around the time I was born.

Both of them are sturdy, high-quality pieces of furniture; however, the dark finish really didn't work in any of our bedrooms, which are predominantly filled with white furniture. And so, these two pieces continued to collect dust in the basement.

That is, of course, until I developed an unhealthy addiction to the news. Being trapped in the house for an extended period of time gives one plenty of additional opportunities to obsessively check the news for the latest developments—which almost always seem to be bad—and contribute to a general sense of doom and hopelessness.

 Cont'd on page 7

Wood Restoration (Cont'd from Page 6)



Top: With its varnish stripped off, the rocking chair awaits sanding and painting. Middle: After multiple coats of primer and paint, the rocking chair looked beautiful. Bottom: The hope chest received similar treatment. Photos by Chip Kastner.

So, I decided to paint some furniture, which is something I've only done once before. I did some cursory research online, then headed to the hardware store for supplies, cleared out a nice space in the garage, turned on some music and got to work.

Even though the primer claimed it could be applied directly over existing stains and finishes, most of the advice I found online suggested removing the existing varnish and stain to the extent possible. I brushed the furniture with a generous coating of Citristrip (hoping it would work better than it did on the windows) and waited for about an hour. As the name implies, Citristrip has a citrusy smell that I normally don't find offensive. But when you put it on varnish... it's a different story entirely. Fortunately, I still had the respirator that I had used to redo my window frames, so I rushed to put it on.

Using a plastic putty knife, I scraped up the varnish and stain that loosened from the surface. Unlike with paint, Citristrip turned the varnish into a horrible black goo that stuck to everything it came in contact with. Many, many paper towels later, I had gotten much of it off most of the flat surfaces; however, small spots remained, as did plenty of varnish on the curves and intricate design work on the furniture.

To get the rest of the varnish off, I doused some steel wool with mineral spirits and scrubbed the furniture until all traces of varnish were gone. With the furniture looking clean, I went to work with sandpaper, starting with a coarser grit and working my way up. The hope chest had a couple of dents in it, which I filled to the best of my ability with a wood putty before sanding.

I wanted a durable finish for both pieces of furniture, so I opted for a semi-gloss, oil-based paint; My past experience with latex paint on furniture had been disappointing. I started by coating both pieces with an oil-based primer that claimed to readily block tannins from seeping through. I must say that I found that it didn't work as well as advertised; when I came back after the primer had dried, I found plenty of spots that had bled through. I put on another coat, and found the same results. It seemed the third time was a charm—fortunately, the primer dried fairly quickly, or I would have spent a week on priming alone.

Next came the paint. Working on the rocking chair first, I used a natural fiber bristle brush. Unfortunately, not being an expert painter, the brush marks that it left were more visible than I had hoped and not completely straight; furthermore, I had a tendency to put too much paint on the brush (no matter how little I thought I was using), causing some nasty drips on the spindles and other delicate parts of the chair. Finally, cleaning the brush with mineral spirits after each painting session was a nasty chore that I loathed.

For the hope chest, I switched to cheap foam brushes. I know that many professionals would take issue with this, but there aren't visible brush marks, there was no mineral spirit-based cleanup, and the drips were definitely lessened. All in all, I think the hope chest looks a little better than the rocking chair.

I'll admit that if somebody paid me to restore either of these pieces, they'd probably be unhappy with the results. While I was able to remove some of the drips with a plastic putty knife, there are some that I missed, especially on the spindles. There are some uneven brush marks on the rocking chair. But, they do say you're your own worst critic; everyone else who has seen the furniture says that both pieces look beautiful, and now they're going to see much more use than they would otherwise.

Best of all, it filled up time that would normally be filled with less fulfilling pastimes... Like checking the news.

Another time, another war: St. Louis in the 1940s

by Ron "Johnny Rabbitt" Elz - KMOX Radio

As we deal with COVID-19 and what it might do to our future, this commentary about the past offers some insight as to what life was like in St. Louis and St. Louis Hills during the terror of WWII.

We then faced visible enemies; but as the Allies fought the Axis, we had no clear picture of what the result of the War would be. The constant reminders and fear of this unknown conclusion kept us on edge—but, as now, life, though changed, went on.

What follows is a look back at that time by using some ads from the weekly St. Louis Public Service Co. bus and streetcar passes, which cost \$1.25. Public transportation was imminently important then as many people did not have cars, while the families who did, usually had just one car, or "machine," as they were often called. New cars were not being made, gas was rationed, and new tires were almost impossible to come by.

We joined the battle on December 7th, 1941, which was the year Ted Drewes opened on Chippewa—U. S. Route 66. Prophetically, the bus pass for the week that started on 12/7 promoted a program called "Fun to be free" to play the Municipal Auditorium Convention Hall on Wednesday the 10th. It was presented by the Stage, Screen, Radio & Arts Division of "Fight for Freedom."

The ad on the pass for the week of December 21st stated "Attend Your Church during Christmas Week." One such church could have been St. Gabriel the Archangel, when it held services in the basement auditorium of the then-one story school. Another church might have been Ascension Lutheran which was in their current building that was completed in 1940.

On the pass for the week of February 22nd, the little card plugged St. Louis' Greatest Radio Show. This was a half-hour production with St. Louis stars on Broadway, including Vincent Price, Sally Benson (who wrote the book "Meet Me in St. Louis" and the stage hit "Junior Miss"), plus other celebs including New York's mayor Fiorello La Guardia and our mayor William Dee Becker. The program aired simultaneously on KMOX, KSD, KXOK, KWK, WIL and WTMV. If your radio was on the fritz the nearest radio repair shop was B & M Service at 5114 Hampton.

In the summer of '42, the week of September 27th bus and streetcar pass invited people to attend the Victory Garden Harvest Show the first weekend of October at Shaw's Garden to benefit Army-Navy Relief. Admission was 30 cents. In our neighborhood the St. Louis Hills Garden Club held a flower show where a Mrs. Hoffman won a special ribbon for an arrangement of purple clematis. The judge was Bill Schray of Wm. Schray & Sons Florists that had its shop and conservatory at Hampton and Devonshire.

Food and its preparation was of high importance in the War years and in March '43, the St. Louis Globe-Democrat sponsored a War Time Food School at the Washington University Field House at which they taught the art of buying, growing, canning and cooking—for Victory. In the Hampton Village Shopping Center, which was just 4 years old, the Bettendorf grocery store was in its third year, and had increased its size in '42 making it according to Joe Bettendorf the World's Largest Supermarket! The food store that was actually inside the borders of St. Louis Hills at that time was Binder's Market at 4414 Donovan, which purveyed products by Topmost and American Lady. That location is now LeGrand's Market, Deli & Catering.



Cont'd on page 9

St. Louis bus passes from the 1940s provide a glimpse into life in St. Louis during World War II. Photos provided by Ron Elz.

Lawn and Garden Awards coming soon

by Sarah Seger

It seems few things feel better than walking through the neighborhood on a beautiful spring day and taking in our own little piece of nature here in the Hills. Given how cooped up we've been at the start of our warmer months this year, it feels better than ever to get a peek of new signs of growth and color. I know I've personally found a lot of encouragement in being able to enjoy small projects around the yard this year.

Whether gardening for you is source of fresh air, sunshine, vitamin D boost, or just for fun, it seems we are all more ready than ever to get our fill this year. With having less of an opportunity at the start of the season to get out and get new plants, it can be a good time to take inventory and spread out some of the perennials that have grown crowded in their beds over the years, giving them more space for social distancing.

Some things to consider when you're transplanting plants:

- Water the plant to be transplanted the day before you plan to move them. This will ensure they are hydrated in preparation for the move and will also make it easier for you to dig.
- Dig and/or transplant when it's overcast or during cooler evening hours. This allows the plant to better adjust to its new spot.

- Don't leave the roots exposed to the elements. Try your best to remove each plant just before it's replanted.

- Water the hole before you transplant into it. You want the soil nice and saturated.

- Once planted, water the whole plant, leaves and all again.

This will hopefully help you gear up for a beautiful summer and we move into another year of celebrating your efforts with the St. Louis Hills Lawn and Garden Awards. Judging has begun and will run through June 25th. Back this year by popular demand is a Best Back Yard Award. This award, of which there will be 3 awarded, is self-nominated. If you would like to be considered for this award, contact me and I will arrange a time for the judges come by and take a look at your prized backyard.

Along with the 3 Best Back Yard Awards, there will be 12 Best Lawn & Garden Awards given, 2 Best Multi-Family Awards, 1 Best Block Award, and 1 Best Church Award for best landscape.

Any questions or referrals you have please send them my way via the contact information below or direct message us on Instagram (stlouishills) or Facebook (St. Louis Hills Neighborhood Association).

Sarah Seger / sarahseger15@gmail.com / 314.435.8923

World War II (Cont'd from Page 8)

As it is today while we're courageously fighting coronavirus, music was a great panacea in the Second World War, and in April, 1943 our St. Louis Symphony turned to the public for help as they asked for support with a request to give any amount you can—even a dime—to the Orchestra maintenance fund. Vladimir Golschmann was the SLSO conductor at the time, which was a post he held for 25 years. One of St. Louis Hills' top symphony supporters back then was the Hyneck School of Music at 4701 Hampton where they taught voice, harmony and arranging.

While war raged on in '44 we turned to distractions such as Forest Park Highlands, the Admiral, the Mississippi Valley Kennel Club

Dog Show to benefit dogs for defense at Walsh Stadium which was at 5200 Oakland, and the Ice Capades of '44 at The Arena. A simple, inexpensive way to get to such venues from St. Louis Hills was by streetcar or bus. There'd been bus service on Chippewa since the early '30s and beginning in April 1940 we had a bus route on Hampton. There was a streetcar line on Macklind ending on the south at the Southampton loop, and another on Gravois ending at the Hampton loop. The message on the week of the April 6th bus and streetcar pass was that the St. Louis Public Service Company wanted track workers to apply at their employment office at 39th & Park. Benefits were a steady good paying job, free passes on streetcars and buses as well as low cost insurance and hospitalization.

At the start of 1945, the war dragged on, and as it had been since late '41, construction had stopped everywhere including in St. Louis Hills; but the developer of the area, the Cyrus Crane Willmore Organization, kept going, hoping for the best as they sold lots for future development from their office at 4723 Donovan. When V-J Day came on August, 14th, 1945, that week's bus pass had a drawing of Uncle Sam rolling up his sleeves with the message "Veterans! Keep the might in that right and keep fit with a 3 month free membership in the YMCA."

All of us back then pulled together for a common cause of winning the war. Today we're "alone together" fighting an invisible foe.

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A mystery in Francis Park

by Brian McCarthy

Two under-publicized facts about Francis Park: it is the largest “small” park in the City of St. Louis, and a historical mystery lurks within its 60 acres. Each night, light is shed on its mystery if you happen to walk the park after the sun has set. All the sidewalks around and through the park are lit by street lamps. However, a distinct area is lit by street lamps even though it lacks sidewalks; no other pastoral part of the park is similarly lit. A half block south from the Tamm/Nottingham corner, a curved stone stairway descends into a grassy glen that runs alongside a stream extending about 200 feet into the park toward the lily pond. Six street lamps light this glen at night. Why?

The answer requires historical sleuthing in the time when Francis Park was laid out. A grading and dimension plan for the park, prepared by the City Plan Commission, reflects “the character of work completed” in the first six months of 1934. The grading plan is notable for what it shows and for what is not shown. The topography of the Park is similar to what it is today—a flat swath bisects the park, north to south (roughly as if Childress Avenue extended through). There are higher and slightly hillier elevations in each of the four corners. Like much of the St. Louis Hills neighborhood in the early 30’s, the area of the Park was mostly fields dotted with a few stands of trees. Prominent improvements to Francis Park would consist of a grand boulevard of sidewalks flanking a pond in the middle, with rows of trees bordering the sidewalks. Another sidewalk would bisect the Park east to west at the Walsh Street intersections. Today, the sidewalks, the lily pond, rows of cypress trees, tennis and handball courts all exist in more or less the locations and dimensions set out in the early 1930’s.

From 1935 to 1940, the area of the City bounded by Kingshighway on the east, Fyler on the north, and Gravois to the south was the sole locus of residential development. 9 of every 10 residential building permits filed in this period occurred here. The neighborhoods of North- and South-Hampton, Lindenwood Park and St. Louis Hills were wholly created within this five-year period. This era also marked extreme financial insecurity as the effects of the Depression wore on. Grand ideas of city planners for these new neighborhoods ran headlong into chronic unemployment and economic hopelessness.

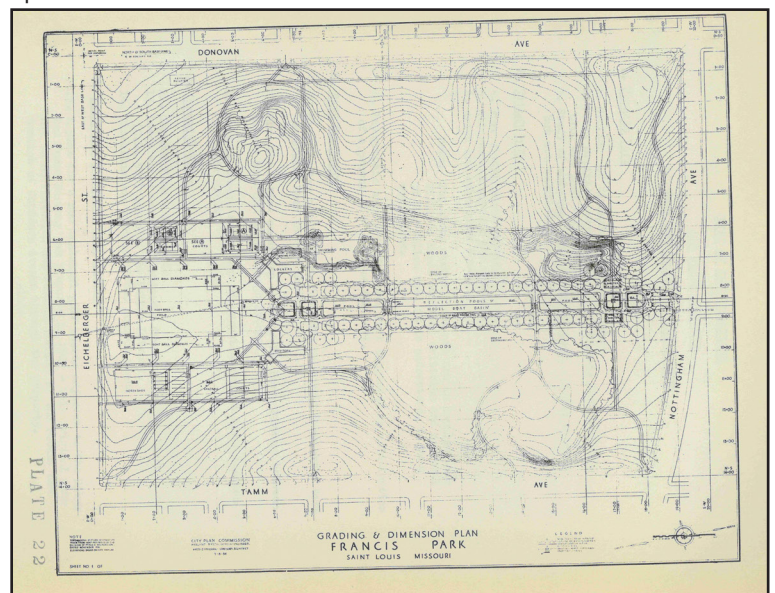
Upwards of 32,000 St. Louisans would receive jobs through New Deal jobs programs, most notably the Works Progress Administration (WPA). Between 1933 and 1935, WPA workers were deployed by the City to construct improvements in Francis Park, some of which were not noted on the City’s official plans. An article in the Post-Dispatch on July 5, 1936 reported on Mayor Bernard Dickmann’s laudatory description of WPA accomplishments, including “development of Francis Park, with construction of four tennis courts, a sunken garden, and a lily pond.”

Park plans certainly called for tennis courts. A reflection pool and model boat basin are specifically noted as well. But the

“sunken garden” in Francis Park is novel. What gives? Are the curved stone stairs and 6 superfluous street lamps vestiges of this sunken garden? If so, what composed this WPA-built improvement?

The stairway was rebuilt in the last 20 years using bluestone with concrete curbs. Before that though, the stairs were constructed of white stone. At the bottom, the stairway ends on a white stone landing bordered by a curvilinear stone bench and well-like structure which served as the starting point of a meandering stream. White stones are the clues that connect the WPA improvements. The bench, the well, the landing at the bottom of the stairs all contain similar stone. So too, two stone bridges that ford the stream as well as a set of four obsolete steps about two hundred feet to the west of the curved stairs. These structures today are lit by the 6 street lamps in the glen. But, as late as the 1980’s, parts of a formal path consisting of finely crushed limestone trap spread between white stone edging could still be seen. The path linked the curved stairs with, and crossed, both bridges and then formed a “T” with arms extending to the short set of steps to the north and in a dog-leg pattern toward the lily pond to the south. Some referred to the pathway as the “Bride’s Walk” owing to the fact that bridal parties would pose for photos on the stairs or near the bridges, or perhaps because the appearance of the white stone.

The path alongside the stream is mostly lost to history over the 85 years since it was constructed. Grass has encroached and reclaimed the pathway. In the summer, when grass is tall, one cannot see any evidence of it. In the winter though, when the ground is saturated, an indentation evinces what once existed. An inch or two of sod grows over the white stone border and the chat of the pathway. Using a spade, one can easily uncover the stones forming the pathway border and reveal a hint of the splendor of the Sunken Garden of Francis Park.



Francis Park plans give no indication of the sunken garden that used to exist to the south of the Tamm/Nottingham intersection. Image provided by Brian McCarthy.

Get out of the house, stay in the car

by Chip Kastner

I was looking at the back of a box of Ritz crackers, which depicted the various various things you can do with them: Guacamole and sour cream for a tailgate party. Coleslaw and pulled pork for a backyard BBQ. Peanut butter and popcorn for a season premiere party. Melted white chocolate and sprinkles for a birthday party. Cream cheese and strawberry preserves for the book club. "You've got the stuff to make life rich," it says.

I may have Ritz crackers, but it doesn't seem like any of us will be attending any tailgate parties, backyard BBQs, season premiere parties, birthday parties or book clubs any time soon. So, how is one to make life rich?

One idea is to take a little road trip. Yesterday, my wife suggested that we go to Lone Elk Park, which is the perfect place to go at a time like this: It's free, it's not that far away, and you don't have to get out of your car to take in the sights. We went at about 5 p.m. on a rainy and cloudy Saturday, and although the park was probably busier than I've ever seen it, it wasn't *terrible*. There

was a small herd of bison right along the road in one spot, and several elk and deer scattered further away from the road.

If you're already at Lone Elk Park, it's just another 30 minutes to the Rockwoods Reservation on the outer fringes of Wildwood. There's actually a road that goes right through the middle of the reservation; exit Highway 109 at Woods Avenue and go west, then immediately turn right on Glencoe Road. This will lead you through the heart of the park before depositing you on Manchester Road. Afterwards, take a right on Manchester, go past Highway 109 and make a right on Old Fairway Drive; this will turn into Old State Road. Go right on Pierside Lane (if you hit Highway 100, you've gone too far) and then right on Kiefer Creek Road. Make a right on St. Paul Road and follow that until it ends near the Meramec River for a scenic wooded route.

Another nearby option is the segment of the Great River Road that runs through the area, particularly between Alton and Grafton, IL where it winds between the Mississippi on one side and limestone bluffs on the other.

Clarksville, Missouri sits on the Mississippi River about 90 minutes away and is the site of Lock and Dam No. 24, one of 27 locks and dams along the Mississippi River north of St. Louis that's used to facilitate barge traffic. Like many of the other locks and dams, it's on the National Register of Historic Places.

If you're feeling even more ambitious, consider taking I-64 west to Highway 94 in St. Charles County and head southwest. This would normally take you to our local "wine country," but if you stay in the car you'll go through scenic bluffs and overlooks. You can turn around in Augusta in the heart of wine country; if you really have time to kill, you can keep going until you hit Hermann... or even Jefferson City. You likely won't be able to visit the state capitol, but you should at least be able to see it from the outside.

It might not be as much fun as a backyard BBQ or season premiere party, but it's a good way to get out of the house for awhile.



Why did the bison cross the road? The world may never know, but she gave visitors to Lone Elk Park an up-close view. Photo by Bridget Kastner.



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Willmore Park sign just one of several improvements

by Sal Easterley

Willmore Park, the last major park to be developed in the City of St. Louis, was established in 1947 according to the new stone (marquee) monuments at the entry to the park and from its twin facing the bend of Jamieson Ave and Hampton Ave. The new marquees were built this year winter with block and stone and should last way beyond 2247.

Willmore Park is named for Cyrus Crane Willmore (1889-1949) who donated 70 of the park's 105 acres to the city. Mr. Willmore founded the Cyrus Crane Willmore Organization, Inc. in 1920. In late 1929, St. Louis Hills, "A city within a city," was started on a 700 acre tract. Mr. Willmore was a developer and builder in St. Louis Hills, Webster Groves, University Hills, and other communities in the area according to historical sources. As a professional in building materials, I can assure you that Mr. Willmore would be happy with the stone/block signs just by looking at the houses he built in St. Louis Hills with their beautiful brick and stone exteriors.

The signs were erected to replace the old and worn wooden signs that looked like they have been at the entry into the park since 1947. The surprise was the second one at the bend of Jamieson Ave and Hampton Ave, placed at the site of a garden in which the Princeton Heights Neighborhood Association Board obtained a grant from Operation Brightside for planting and improvements.

According to past St. Louis City Alderman Larry Arnowitz, "This has been one of my planned upgrades since 2018 after I was able to get the street department to dispose of the recycle bins just inside the entry." Arnowitz explained that the recycle bins brought people dumping large items, and he relayed a story of a county resident that was caught on camera dumping items in front of the containers. Arnowitz made a phone call after capturing the license plate, and the county resident explained he was told by a city friend that it was allowed. Larry did say the county resident returned to pick up his trash, but he was unsure if the county resident was fined the penalty of \$1,000.

Arnowitz also stated how proud he was of the other accomplishments that are upgrades to the park bearing Mr. Willmore's name. The newest park feature is the "street soccer arena" by the tennis courts. This is not any match for the new STL Soccer Stadium downtown, but it can help young city soccer players feel like it is.

Other items listed by the past Alderman included the upgraded Disc Golf platforms, new water fountains, new park benches, ramps/decks over depressed water hole areas, signs, and a couple of newer BBQ grills at the pavilions.

Arnowitz told of his small involvement with the

Southwest City Dog Park (a 501C3 nonprofit) and helping them get electric, even though it was not a formal city function. He also listed more items on his mind which include a few more grills, new ballfield signs, new directional signs all around, and a full remodel to the bathroom on the corner of Jamieson and Hampton.

Arnowitz went on to discuss several other area upgrades to St. Marcus Cemetery's fence and a possible veteran's flag memorial to go along with names of veterans that are already on bricks at the entry to the cemetery along Gravois Ave.

This article was spurred by posts from the social media website Nextdoor, that mentioned these new Willmore Park entrance signs and inquired about how the city paid for the new signs. Arnowitz stated that the Ward 12 funding comes from a special sales tax for park funds for upgrades and improvements that are not related to normal upkeep such as fallen trees. The signs were not donated, but just part of the normal and scheduled upgrades for improvements to parks to keep them fresh and usable for city residents from all over the area.

Willmore is one of the most diversely utilized parks in all of south Saint Louis, especially if you go by activities allowed at the park. There is kickball, baseball, softball, Turkey Day family football games, disc golf, fishing ponds, cross country trails for area high schools, walking and biking trails, soccer fields, picnic pavilions, a fenced in dog park, street soccer arenas, lighted tennis courts, and a top grade playground with water attractions. There is no blade of grass at the park that is not used or tread upon during nice weather.

Last, we did want to mention that Carondelet Park, which is split between the 11th and 12th wards, received new entry signs made of the same materials and size in the same time period.



The new stone entrance signs in Willmore Park were paid for by a special sales tax that funds park upgrades and improvements. Photo provided by Sal Easterley.

Keeping busy: New hobbies and little projects

by Chip Kastner and Barbara Liebman

You may have read the article on page 6 detailing my extensive attempts at wood restoration projects around the house. Such an endeavor might be more than many readers are willing to undertake.

If you're looking for a more manageable hobby project to undertake around the home while you're stuck inside, though, here are some various thoughts.

Home Canning

Many people are rethinking the amount of food they waste during normal times. One way to keep extra produce around is through home canning; you can make a variety of tasty recipes at home that will last a year with the right equipment.

I dabbled with home canning a bit in the past, but admittedly gave away all of my supplies after they started collecting dust. All you really need in order to get started is a canning tool set (less than \$15) and some Mason jars (a little over \$1 each, and they're reusable).

However, this will limit you only to preserving high-acidity foods such as fruits and pickles. Extremely deadly botulism spores can grow in the low-oxygen environment of a sealed Mason jar, and the temperature of boiling water won't kill them. Acidic foods will inhibit growth of the spores, but for non-acidic foods you'll need to buy a pressure canner; these start at around \$75, and will allow you to increase the boiling point of water to about 250 degrees, which is enough to kill the spores.

The *Ball Complete Book of Home Preserving* is pretty much the gold standard for home canning recipes, and will provide lots of ideas to keep you busy.

Smaller Painting Jobs

If you're not looking to tackle a piece of furniture or window frames with 80 years of paint on them, there are likely other objects around your house that could use a fresh coat of paint.

Like many area homes, my house has an old coal chute that's no longer in use. A previous owner had, rather amusingly, sealed it shut with electrical tape. The tape was peeling off and the hatch was badly rusted, so I used black caulk to seal the hatch shut, sanded off the rust and loose and peeling paint, and applied a couple of layers of black Rustoleum to the hatch, which is now looking great.

I had a Laclede Gas inspector tell me he didn't like the rust on the gas pipe coming into my house, telling me to sand and paint it as well. The same can of Rustoleum was put to good use there as well, and the pipe looks much better than it used to.

When I repainted my window frames, I also used the opportunity to sand and repaint all the lintels over the windows. If these rust too badly, they can weaken and contribute to "stair-step" cracks in the mortar around your windows; if things get bad enough, they can actually cause structural issues.

Your deck or your fence might be bigger projects than you're willing to tackle right now, but fascia boards and exterior doors are smaller areas that could often use a fresh coat of paint.

While it's not literally paint, if you have some tired-looking wooden doors and window frames, giving them a quick sand and applying a coat of varnish can go a long way towards making them gleam again.

Scrubbing things

The front of my house faces the north, which means it is cast in heavier shadow for much of the year. Combined with the tall trees lining the streets, I've developed a bit of algae growth on the front porch and other exposed areas.

I decided to bite the bullet and scrub the porch down with a scrub brush and a diluted bleach solution. One pass didn't remove all the algae, but it did seem to help quite a bit.

While I was at it, I took a soapy solution and a scrub brush, and gave a nice scrubbing to the cushions on our outdoor chairs. I gave them a quick rinse with the hose and stood them upright to dry in the sun.

Another thing I try to tackle every year or so is the grout in my bathroom tile. Equipped with some bleach spray and a grout brush, I go row by row across the floor, scrubbing the entire floor until it looks like new.  Cont'd on page 15



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A rose is a rose is a rose... and has its thorns

by Jeff Leshner

The rose is possibly the most popular flower of all. It has been mentioned in poems, in books, in movies. They even have a college bowl game named after them. They are sent to people to show your love and to also show your sorrow. They come in hundreds of colors and many sizes. It has all of the properties of the perfect flowering garden plant, but first we will discuss the history of this amazing plant.

Roses have been discovered in fossils dating back 35 million years. It is believed that the Chinese first cultivated them around 5,000 years ago. The Romans used them for many different purposes such as large public gardens, confetti at celebrations, as an ingredient in perfumes and also in medicine. With the Roman Empire's demise, so went their popularity. Their use in gardens seemed to rise and fall with gardening trends for centuries to follow.

In fifteenth century England, there was fighting between factions for control. York took the white rose as their symbol and Lancaster the red as theirs; thus it became known as the War of the Roses. By the seventeenth century, the high demand and popularity increased the value to the point that they could be used as legal tender. The late eighteenth century is when the repeat bloomers were introduced, hybridisers took great interest and soon breeding increased the hardiness and blooming season.

Growing roses can bring a gardener a lot of satisfaction. Rose bushes love the sun, so if you're planning a rose garden pick a spot with full sun. The soil should be well draining and rich, and it helps to mix in some organic matter such as compost. After planting, cover the soil with 2 to 3 inches of organic mulch, which will help prevent diseases on the foliage by reducing water splashing on the leaves. They need to be watered often, and it is best to use a soaking hose to prevent getting the foliage wet. You will also need to check them frequently for insect infestation and diseases. Pruning is a must and should be done often, as it promotes growth, determines the shape, helps deter disease and makes for a healthier plant. This sounds like a lot of work. I have never grown them myself, so I cannot help with any firsthand knowledge.

The roses we sell at Leshner's Flowers these days mainly come from Ecuador. This has changed many times in the history of our shop. Back in the seventies when we opened, most of the roses we used were grown in California, with some being grown locally. In those days we had 2 rose growers in the St. Louis area, one in Kirkwood, the other in Pena, Illinois. The varieties were much more limited, and the quality was good but not as good as what we have available today. The growing of flowers in Bogota, Colombia began in the 1970s and has grown to 200,000 acres. They were growing many different kinds of flowers, including roses.



Roses, now available in countless varieties, have been valued by humans for at least 5,000 years. Photo by Bridget Kastner.

Ecuador got into flower production in the early 1990s and have become the biggest shipper of roses to the St. Louis area as of today. The many varieties are the highest quality that we have ever had, and the choices of these premium roses grows by many every year. The size, quality and beauty of these roses continue to impress me year after year. Rosa Prima started production in 1995 with just a few acres and has grown to hundreds of acres and 1200 employees. They are currently averaging 300,000 stems cut every day and this is just one of many farms.

Considering all of this, I can't understand how they grow and ship them to our suppliers for the price we pay. If you're interested in viewing how they are grown, go to YouTube and type in RosaPrima to see some great videos.



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REAL ID: Delayed but still coming

by Donna Baringer,
District 82 State
Representative



Currently, a valid Missouri driver license is good enough for a citizen of Missouri to board a plane and fly. However, this will be changing in October 2021. Starting then, Missourians will need a REAL ID compliant ID to fly or enter a military base.

REAL ID comes from the REAL ID Act of 2005, a federal law that focused on fraud protection, anti-terrorism, and driver license and nondriver license identification card security. The REAL ID Act established minimum security standards for state-issued driver licenses and ID cards and prohibits federal agencies from accepting for official purposes driver licenses and ID cards from states that do not meet these standards. The Missouri Department of Revenue has been working to meet the requirements of the REAL ID Act.

You can apply for a REAL ID-compliant driver license or nondriver ID card at one of Missouri's more than 170 license office locations. You will be required to submit valid, original documents demonstrating proof of each of the below items at the time you apply:

- Identity
- Lawful Status in the United States
- Social Security Number
- Missouri Residency (two documents)

Additional items may be required if your name is different from the name on your identity and date of birth verification document. For specific information on REAL ID and the documents needed to obtain one, please visit <https://dor.mo.gov/drivers/real-id-information/#Q5>.

The St. Louis City Recorder of Deeds Office can also assist you in obtaining any documents necessary and can be reached at (314) 622-4610.

Hobbies and Projects (Cont'd from Page 13)

Upholstery repair

Neighborhood resident Barbara Liebman writes:

Being home bound affords us the opportunity to complete some of those "I'll finish that when I get a chance" projects. Embarrassing to admit, my project sat for ten years, that's right 120 months, in our basement! What!

The chair, probably part of a 1920/1930 dining room set, bought for \$10 at a church sale in Springfield, Illinois almost 20 years ago. It is so well constructed except the seat webbing ripped

shortly after our move back to St. Louis. New webbing was purchased but stayed in the bag for years.

Using a sturdy drapery panel and leftover quilt batting, the job was completed in two days. There is enough drapery fabric left to stitch up a back pillow. The chair is now ready for extra seating in our living room.

I am so motivated, my next project is recovering an ottoman. Must confess an electric stapler made all the difference in the speed and ease of refinishing.

Left: St. Louis Hills resident Barbara Liebman purchased this sturdy chair at a church sale almost 20 years ago. Not long afterwards, the seat webbing ripped and it's been sitting in her basement ever since. Right: Liebman used the opportunity of being stuck at home to repair the seat. Photos by Barbara Liebman.

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Block Captain program revived

by Pat Talley, Crime and Safety Education

At one time, St. Louis Hills had an active Block Captain program in place with over 100 volunteers coordinating efforts on their blocks. Over time, the program dissolved, leaving the neighborhood without a crucial function that provides communication and stability to each block.

With Mary Jo Gabel leading the effort, your SLHNA Safety Committee is working to revive the Block Captain program. Gabel began the process by contacting as many former block captains as possible, asking them to reprise their role from previous years. So far 123 volunteers have made the commitment while 98 blocks are still in need of Captains.

The Block Captain has various responsibilities, including the development of a block communication system, the welcoming of new residents and keeping an up-to-date contact list that is distributed to all residents on the block.

Additionally, the Block Captain coordinates block activities, shares SLNHA information with residents and attends a couple of Block Captain meetings each year. This doesn't have to be a lonely occupation as co-Captains are encouraged.

The Block Captain program is key to maintaining safety and security in the St. Louis Hills neighborhood. "The key person in any Neighborhood Watch group is the Block Captain," says Gabel.

Neighbors are encouraged to report criminal activity, or other less urgent information, to the Block Captain who can then make sure the entire block is aware of what's happening. To keep lines of communication open is the most important Block Captain duty.

But it isn't all about crime and safety. The Block Captain can make the remainder of the job anything they like from coordination of block parties, social gatherings, introducing new neighbors to the block, maintaining a Facebook page, or any other activity that keeps the neighbors communicating with each other.

This volunteer job can take as much time as you want to spend. The program is a success if residents are aware of the program, what's happening on the block, and feel connected to one another.

"Please consider joining the Block Captain program", says Gabel. "Block units create the foundation for a strong and vital neighborhood, a better place to live, work and play."

If you are interested in filling this important position in the community please contact Mary Jo Gabel at mojogabe@sbcglobal.net.

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