

Central New York State WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE TIMELINE



Photo – courtesy of <http://humanitiesny.org>

TIMELINE OF EVENTS IN SECURING WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE IN CENTRAL NEW YORK STATE

- A. Some New York State developments prior to the July 1848 Seneca Falls Convention
- B. The Seneca Falls Convention
- C. Events 1850 – 1875 and 1860s New York State Map
- D. Events 1875 – 1893
- E 1-2. Women's Suffrage and the Erie Canal.
- F-1. 1894 Ithaca Convention
- F-2. 1894 Ithaca Convention (continued)
- G. Events 1895 – 1900
- H. Events 1900 – 1915
- I. Events 1915 – 1917 – Final Steps to Full Women's Suffrage in New York
- J. Events Following Women's Suffrage in New York 1918 – 1925
- K. Resources

Symbols



Events around Ithaca, New York



Curiosities



New York State Pioneer Feminists: Elizabeth Cady Stanton & Susan Brownell Anthony. Photo – courtesy of <http://www.assembly.state.ny.us>

A. SOME NEW YORK STATE DEVELOPMENTS PRIOR TO THE JULY 1848 SENECA FALLS CONVENTION

- 1846 – New York State constitutional convention received petitions from at least three different counties calling for women’s right to vote.
- 1846 – Samuel J. May, Louisa May Alcott’s uncle, and a Unitarian minister and radical abolitionist from Syracuse, New York, vigorously supported Women’s Suffrage in a sermon that was later widely circulated.
- April, 1848 – Married Women’s Property Act Passed.
- May, 1848 – Liberty Party convention in Rochester, New York approved a resolution calling for “universal suffrage in its broadest sense, including women as well as men.”
- Summer 1848 – Lucretia Mott, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and Matilda Joslyn Gage were all inspired in their suffrage efforts by the clan mothers of the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) Nation of New York State. Mott traveled to the Seneca Nation in the summer of 1848 where “she watched women who had equal responsibilities with men in all aspects of their lives – family, spiritual, government, economic.” She “... marveled that the women were the great power among the clan...” [Wagner]



Abigail Bush did NOT attend the Seneca Falls convention. Lucretia Mott was the featured speaker at the Seneca Falls convention.

Abigail Bush (1810-1899)

She served as president of the 1848 Rochester Women’s Rights Convention, which was held immediately after the Seneca Falls Convention. By doing so, Bush became the first woman to preside over a public meeting composed of both men and women in the United States. In late 1848 she also became a member of the Western New York Anti-Slavery Society.



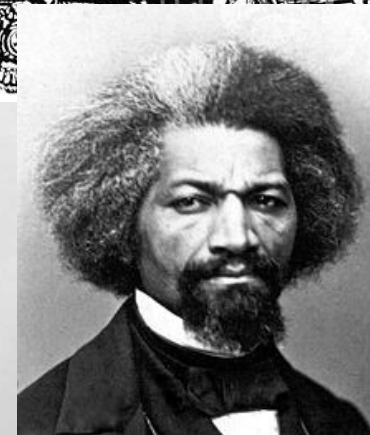
Abigail Bush. Photo – courtesy of <http://www.winningthevote.org>

B. THE SENECA FALLS CONVENTION AND SOME IMMEDIATE EVENTS FOLLOWING

- July 19-20, 1848 – The Seneca Falls Convention. Important attendees: Lucretia Mott, Susan B. Anthony, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Mary M'Clintock and Frederick Douglass. Lucretia Mott was the featured speaker at the convention.
- July 20, 1848 – The Declaration of Sentiments, a document drafted by the women attendees of the Convention, not only endorsed women's suffrage, but also elaborated upon the then controversial topics of property rights, divorce, guardianship of children, employment outside the home, and education.
- Out of approximately 300 attendees at the convention, Frederick Douglass was one of 32 men who signed the Declaration of Sentiments (68 women signed it).
- August 2, 1848 – A Woman's Rights Convention was held in Rochester, New York as a follow-up to the Seneca Falls meeting where 107 more signatures were added to the Declaration of Sentiments.
- October, 1848 – Emily Collins of South Bristol, New York organized the Women's Equal Rights Union where 62 women and men signed a petition that was sent to Albany endorsing Women's Suffrage.



"In respect to political rights, we hold woman to be justly entitled to all we claim for man. We go further, and express our conviction that all political rights which it is expedient for men to exercise, it is equally so for woman." – Frederick Douglass [North Star, July 28 1848]



Frederick Douglass. Photo – courtesy of newrepublic.com

C. EVENTS 1850-1875 and 1860s New York State Map

- **May 12, 1851** – Amelia Jenks Bloomer introduced Susan B. Anthony to Elizabeth Cady Stanton on a street corner in Seneca Falls.
- **November 30 – December 1, 1853** – First Annual New York State Convention on Women's Rights.
- **November, 1853** – Susan B. Anthony first took up the cause of women's rights when she began to speak out on behalf of securing additional property rights for women in New York State.
- **March 21, 1860** – New York State Earnings Act secured a married woman sole property rights, guaranteed joint guardianship of children, and wife's earnings were assured as her own property. The Earnings Act is an expansion of the 1848 Married Women's Property Act.
- **November, 1872** – Susan B. Anthony and other women voted in the presidential election. (She was later put on trial in Canandaigua, and found guilty and fined \$100, which she refused to pay.)



1869 – Susan B. Anthony spoke in Ithaca at the invitation of Ezra Cornell, but the speech was poorly attended and the cause of women's suffrage proved unpopular.

HARRIET TUBMAN

- Born Araminta Ross around 1820, she later took her mother's name, Harriet. She was about 29 years old when she escaped from the Maryland plantation where she was a slave, even though her husband at the time, John Tubman, was a free black man. Once Tubman was settled in Philadelphia she began to get involved in the underground railroad. In the late 1850's William Seward sold Tubman the land in Auburn which became her home base for the rest of her life. Auburn was a city of anti-slavery sentiment and pro Women's Suffrage. Here Tubman made the acquaintance of Susan B. Anthony, who helped her harbor fugitive slaves. After her involvement in the civil war she embraced the cause of Women's Suffrage. "Tubman's role was not that of a leader but that of a strong supporter. As a woman who had fought for her own freedom and the freedom of others...Tubman believed in the equality of all people, black or white, male or female, which made her sympathetic to the women's rights movement". She toured Washington, New York and Boston speaking on behalf of women's voting rights. In the late 1890's, when she was in her mid to late 70's, the New England Suffrage Association gave a reception in Harriet Tubman's honor.



Harriet Tubman, ca. 1860s. Image – Courtesy of www.usatoday.com

**THE STATE OF NEW YORK
FROM ORIGINAL SURVEYS.**

J. H. FRENCH, CE. ROBERT
PEARSALL SMITH, PUBLISHER.
SYRACUSE 1860.



D. EVENTS 1875-1893



Before 1777, women that owned property, such as widows, were allowed to vote in some colonies. After the Revolutionary War, states revised voting laws in their constitutions and only white male property holders (about 10-16% of the population) were permitted to vote.

- **1876** – Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony and Matilda Joslyn Gage started work on what became a six volume *History of Woman Suffrage*, published from 1881 to 1922 as volumes were completed.
- **1878** – Marietta Benchley, founder of the Radical Party in Ithaca, led a movement to send a petition to the New York State Assembly requesting the vote for women. The Ithaca Democrat newspaper published a copy of the petition on April 18, 1878 which stated "... residents of the State of New York, do ask your Honorable Body to extend the right of Suffrage to woman to the same degree and extent as it is now held by men." The petition ultimately died in the Assembly along with petitions from Dutchess County and Rochester.
- **Early 1880** – A New York State law allowed women to vote in school elections. In February 18, 1880, in Syracuse, 13 women registered and voted, the first time since 1777 that women in New York State had legally voted.
- **1884** – A special New York State law allowed women the right to vote at the charter elections in Union Springs and the right to vote for municipal officers in Dansville, Newport and several other towns.



Photo from the Collection of The History Center in Tompkins County

Louisa Lord Riley (1836-1917)

1893 – She moved to Ithaca, and in 1895 she officially founded the Ithaca Women's Club at the home of Misses Marie and Kate Lewis at 444 N. Aurora Street, when she also became the club's first president. Their theme was "Progress for Women", expressed further in the club's motto "All Are Needed By Each One." Every fourth meeting of the club was dedicated to women's suffrage.



Photo – Courtesy of IthacaJournal.com

Juanita Breckenridge Bates (1860-1946)

1893 – She moved to Ithaca where she became an early leader of the women's rights movement in Ithaca and Brooktondale. She was a founding mother and a founding member of the City Federation of Women's Organizations, and was vice-president of the New York State League of Women Voters. Today she is honored by the naming of Breckenridge House, which is at the corner of North Cayuga and Seneca Streets in downtown Ithaca.

E-1. WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE AND THE ERIE CANAL

The Erie Canal, which opened on October 26, 1825, was the technological marvel of its day that linked lake Erie in western New York State to the Hudson river in the east.

The female proponents of women's rights were quick to exploit this new statewide link for their cause, using the waterway as a means to spread their message.

"Harriet Stanton Blatch, daughter of Elizabeth Cady Stanton, was the architect of the "canal boat campaign." From the boat and large docks, suffragettes waved huge pennants, held creative posters and went from town to town along the canal stopping to talk with women and make speeches in prominent locations within the town. Every town along the canal was decorated with "votes for women" placards and promotional flyers. Speakers addressed large crowds of both men and women from barge podiums and used the new energy created from one stop to move to the next."



Photo from the Collection
of The History Center in Tompkins County

E-2. WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE AND THE ERIE CANAL

Continued...

By the end of the 19th century another new technological invention changed how suffragettes spread their message – the towpath along the canal route became the perfect venue for bicycles. “It signaled a new wave of individualism to women as they rode on along the trail.”

Susan b. Anthony noted “Let me tell you what I think of bicycling. I think it has done more to emancipate women than anything else in the world. I stand and rejoice every time I see a woman ride by on a wheel...the picture of free, untrammelled womanhood.”

This new wave in turn also paved the way for women's fashion to change, as bloomers, a pants and tunic get up, replaced the stodgy and bicycle-unfriendly dresses of the late Victorian Era.



Photo from the Collection
of The History Center in Tompkins County

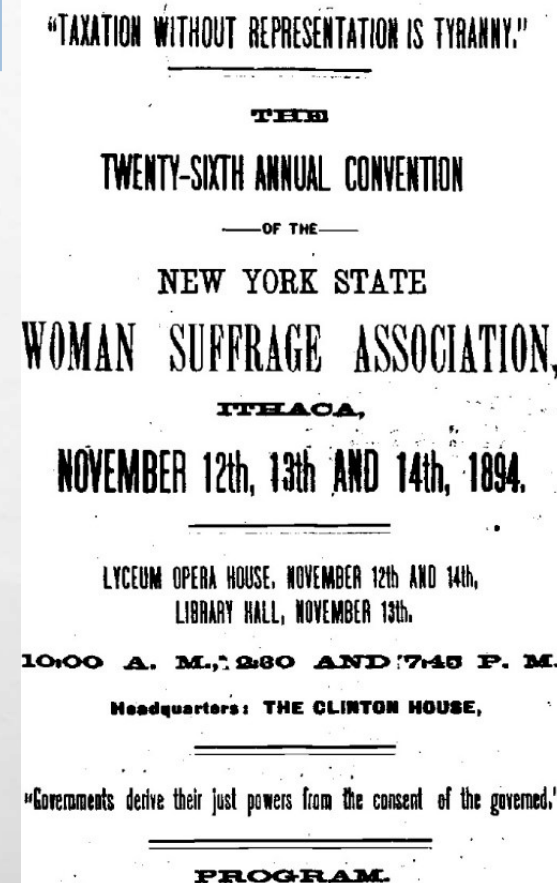
F-1. 1894 ITHACA CONVENTION



• **November 12-14, 1894** – The 26th Annual Convention of the New York State Woman Suffrage Association was held at several different venues including Library Hall and the Lyceum Opera House at 217 N. Aurora Street in downtown Ithaca, despite the fact that at the time there was no women's suffrage organization in Ithaca. A packed house came to hear miss Susan B. Anthony give an evening address at the Lyceum. An executive board meeting to wrap up the event was held on November 15 at the Clinton House with 13 members present.



• **November 12, 1894** - In her closing remarks at the culmination of the convention, Mary Stafford Anthony stated: "let this convention be such as this state has never seen before. Let it be proved that the love of justice is neither dead nor sleeping; that politics means something higher and better than mere party success!" (Mary Stafford Anthony, Report of the Corresponding Secretary of the New York State Woman Suffrage Association)



Newspaper, Ithaca, NY. Morning Herald 1894 – 1895.
Photo from the Collection of The History Center in
Tompkins County

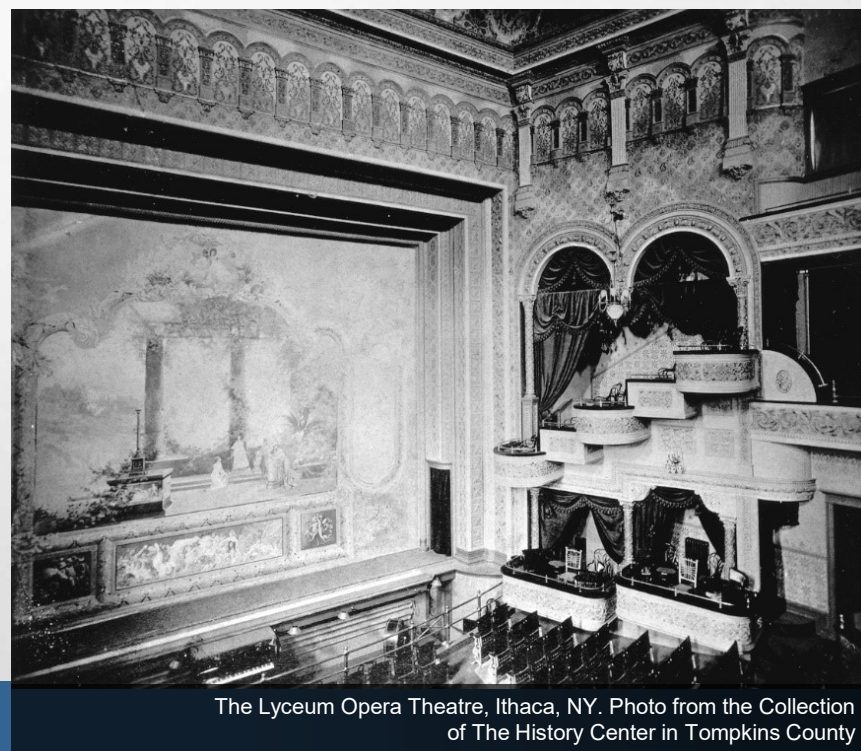
F-2. 1894 ITHACA CONVENTION



- At the culmination of the convention, Mary Stafford Anthony, in her closing remarks stated “I think there has never been a time when the women of the state felt more thoroughly acquainted with each other or more united in the determination to win in the pending struggle for liberty than now. If every woman who believes that “all persons born or naturalized in the United States...are *citizens* of the United States...the time will soon come when the expression, “we, the people of the State of New York,” will be understood to mean what it says, and the *women citizens* will no longer be counted out.” (Mary Stafford Anthony, report of Corresponding Secretary of the New York State Woman Suffrage Association)



- 296,062 names in favor of women’s suffrage were obtained by the close of the convention, put in book form and presented to the constitutional convention with the hope that this would clearly confirm that “*women do want to vote.*”



The Lyceum Opera Theatre, Ithaca, NY. Photo from the Collection of The History Center in Tompkins County

G. EVENTS 1895-1900



- **January, 1895** – The Women’s Club of Ithaca convened seeking “to awaken in its members an interest in topics of general and social importance by means of essays and discussions.” Louisa Riley became the club’s first president, and remained honorary president until her death in 1917, just prior to women earning the right to vote in New York State.



- **March 14, 1899** – The Political Study Club was formed in Ithaca at the home of Mrs. Lucy Calkins. “...The object of this club is to secure women the unrestricted exercise of all the rights of citizenship, and equal constitutional rights with men, and equal protection of the law.” Membership was restricted to “persons in favor of extending the ballot to women.”



- **October, 1899** – A county organization of the Political Study Club was formed with representatives from the Groton, Newfield, and Ithaca Suffrage Clubs in attendance.



In the 1890s, a state-wide anti-suffrage group, The New York State Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage, formed. By 1908, the organization had 90 female members and published a magazine out of Albany, New York, *The Anti-Suffragist*, which was published until 1912.

*GROWTH OF WOMAN
SUFFRAGE IN STATE
STEADY FOR YEARS*

*First Woman’s Rights Convention Was
Held in Seneca Falls Way Back in 1848
---It Was at This Meeting That First
Step of Great Movement Was Taken.*

Photo from the Collection
of The History Center in Tompkins County

H. EVENTS 1900-1915



- **October 31-November 3, 1911** – The 43rd Annual Convention of the New York State Suffrage Association began with the first evening at the Ithaca Hotel, drawing more than 300 participants from around the state. The next day the meeting was held at the Baptist Church on Dewitt Park in Ithaca, New York.

- **1912** – All political parties in New York State declared for women's suffrage in their party platforms.

- **1913** – New York State law granted women the right to vote on tax propositions in towns and villages (but not in incorporated cities).

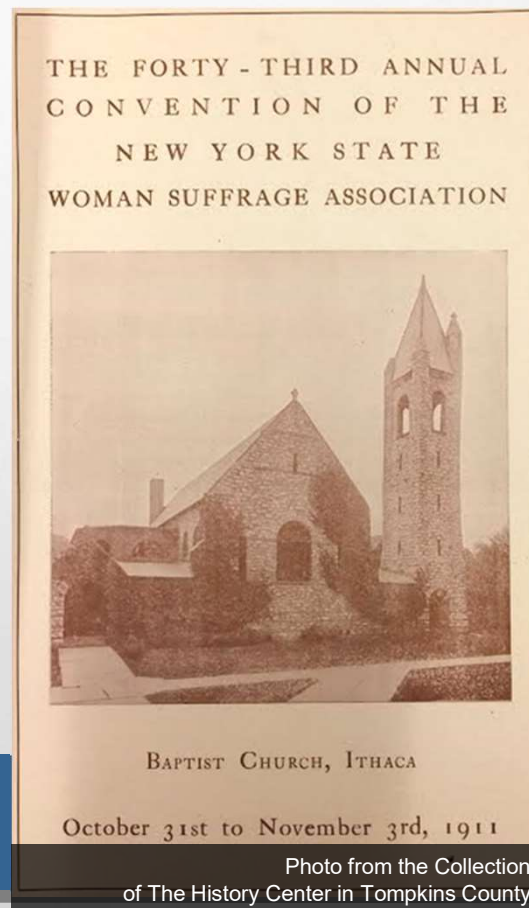
- **1913** – New York State legislature passed a women's suffrage bill. (It would have to be passed in two successive legislative sessions before it could go to the voters as a referendum to amend the New York State constitution.)



- **1913-1915** – Carrie Chapman Catt leads the Empire State Campaign. Helen Brewster Owens, Cornell math professor, chairs Sixth Campaign District which includes Tompkins County.



At the turn of the century, as far as politics and cultural mores were concerned, Ithaca, surrounded by the vastness of rural Tompkins County, remained a somewhat isolated and conservative town.



Old Mother Hubbard
Went to the cupboard
To put on her hat and coat.
She said to her spouse,
"Take care of the house,
For I'm going out to vote."—Ex.

Image from The Tattler Newspaper,
1910.

I. EVENTS 1915- 1917 – FINAL STEPS TO FULL WOMEN’S SUFFRAGE IN NEW YORK



- 1915 – Tompkins County was one of only five counties in the state that voted for the suffrage amendment.
- November 6, 1917 – Proposed Woman Suffrage amendment to the New York State constitution is approved with nearly 54% in favor. New York State became the first state east of the Mississippi to grant **full** suffrage to women.



All the districts in Tompkins County (with the exception of the second district in the town of Ithaca) supported women’s right to vote.

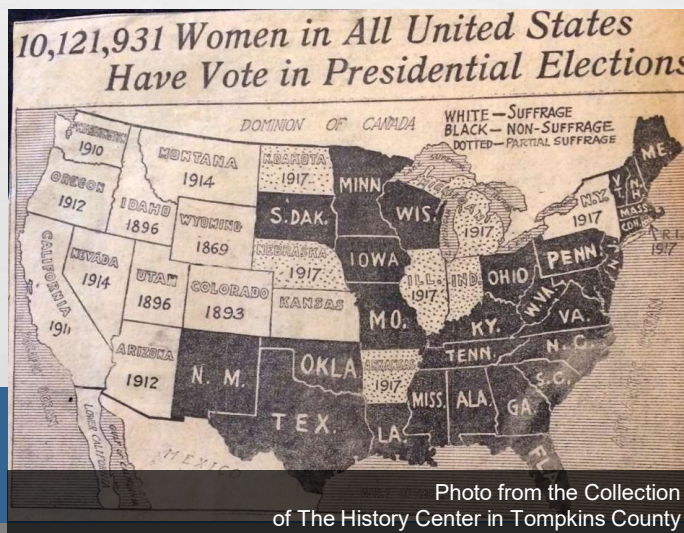


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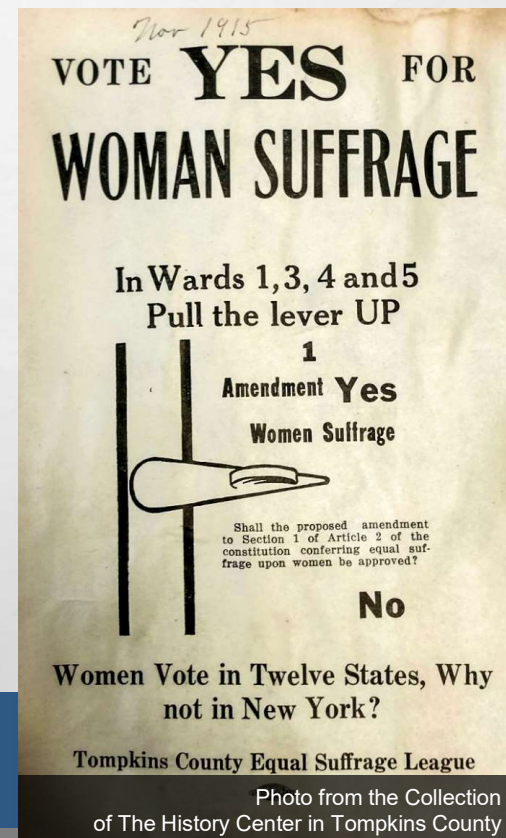


Photo from the Collection of The History Center in Tompkins County

J. EVENTS 1918-1925



- **1918** - Local women were allowed to vote in state elections for the first time. Sixty percent of the over two-thousand women voters in Ithaca enrolled in the Republican Party, followed by the Prohibition Party, Democrats, and Socialists.

- **June 10, 1919** – Governor Alfred E. Smith had called a special session of the New York State legislature, and on this date New York State unanimously ratified the proposed 19th Amendment, which would give women the right to vote nation-wide.



- **1920** – Ithaca's Political Study Club became the League of Women Voters, a local chapter of the organization created to assist newly franchised women carry out their voting responsibilities. The League had approximately one hundred members.
- **August 26, 1920** – The 19th Amendment to the Constitution was ratified. (In 1971 the date August 26 was designated annually to be "Women's Equality Day.")
- **July 21, 1923** – As part of the 75th Anniversary Celebration of the 1848 Seneca Falls Convention, Alice Paul gathered delegates of the National Woman's Party at the Presbyterian Church in Seneca Falls to call for an Equal Rights Amendment to be added to the U.S. Constitution. She was the original author of this proposed amendment which she drafted in 1923.



Alice Paul (1885-1977) was an American suffragist, and one of the principal strategists and leaders of the campaign to pass the 19th Amendment, giving women the right to vote. She spent much time as a suffragist in Europe, and upon returning to America, spent much time in prison, where she and fellow suffragists gained notoriety for their hunger strikes.



Alice Paul. Photo courtesy of Finger Lakes Times <http://www.fltimes.com>



Winton-Brooks Mansion, 100 W. Seneca Street, Ithaca, New York. Photo from the Collection at The History Center.



Winton-Brooks Mansion was purchased in December, 1920, the same year that Ithaca's Political Study Club became the League of Women Voters. It was the home of the City Federation of Women's Organizations from 1920 to 1958.

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