

WPA Press

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE WISCONSIN POTTERY ASSOCIATION

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WWW.WISCONSINPOTTERY.ORG



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FROM THE PRESIDENT...

Dear Members:

We are well into our 11th year now that the snow, what little there was, has disappeared. Unfortunately, one of our few snowfalls was on a meeting night and resulted in the decision to cancel the meeting. We tried to reach you all but, because of our outdated membership roster, we missed several people. I apologize for that and am assured by Tim that a current roster will soon be available.

Thank you all for letting us know what Ohio pottery you have as we begin to plan our "Other Ohio Potteries" exhibit. We are looking forward to broad membership participation in this exhibit, which will give our McCoy, Shawnee, Royal Copley, Rookwood, Cowan, Gonder, Hull, Peters

and Reed, Brush, Burley Winter, Owens, Zanesville, Nicodemus, Robinson Ransbottom, Clewell, etc. collectors a chance to show their wares.

So polish up your lovely pots; we are about to begin the selection process. The committee (Nicole, Rose, Betty and Dave) would love to have any of you volunteer to join us and help plan the exhibit and choose the pieces to be displayed. Just contact one of us.

Jim and Ellen have sent out the show contracts and are beginning to receive responses. If any of you would like to try selling at the show, just contact Jim and Ellen. I say try to sell, because there are no guarantees things will sell but just trying is fun. I am certain you would have fun just being "one of the dealers". Advertising will begin soon and we will be on our way toward another great show.

We are looking forward to visiting with and hearing Kurt Wild speak at our April meeting. I am certain you will enjoy meeting and hearing this nice gentleman, as well as our members presentation in May, and Steve Schoneck speaking on Cowan Pottery in June.

Enjoy Spring and the start of the flea mar-

ket hunting season. See you at the flea markets and other hunting places.

- David Knutzen, WPA President, 2003

2003 WPA Calendar

- March 11**— Rosemeade Pottery by Linda and Bill Bakken
- April 8**— Wild Studio Pottery by Kurt Wild
- May 13**— WPA Members Present on Ohio Pottery
- June 10**— Cowan Pottery by Steve Schoneck
- July**— No meeting
- August 23**— WPA's 8th Annual Sale and Exhibit featuring Ohio Potteries, 9-4, Alliant Energy Center, Madison, WI.
- September 9**— Haviland Pottery by Art and Eileen Wendt
- October 14**— Galena Pottery by Bill Engel
- November 11**— Art of the Figurine by Tim Holthaus, Rose Lindner, Elaine Staaland
- December 2**— WPA Holiday Party (note that this is the *first* Tuesday in December)

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All meetings are held the second Tuesday of each month (except July, August and December) at the Shorewood Hills Community Center.



## PAULINE LOG CABIN UPDATE

*Ori-anne Pagel recently sent this information for the Arts Council of Edgerton (ACE) on upcoming events. Thanks to Ori-anne for the news!*

### As for the Pauline Log Cabin:

It's done but not paid for yet. The Grand Opening is set for Saturday, July 5, 2003 from 11:00am-4:00pm at the site, Clay Pit Heritage Park, 305 W Lawton St. Please put it on your calendar.

We hope to have our local acting Pauline Jacobus present, and the video of Norse

pottery, along with Alan Reed's Pickard book, and the log cabin scrapbooks. Food and music by an Edgerton children's string group is also planned to mark the occasion. Historical markers are planned but may not be ready for the opening festivities.

All donors, as well as the general public, are invited to attend.

The log cabin, built in the 1830s by German immigrants, later became a major part of Wisconsin pottery history. The cabin will be open during all Edgerton festivals and special events or by appointment.

### In other news from ACE:

From **May 1–30** the RCHS Collection of Pauline Pottery and other Edgerton pottery, will be on exhibit at the Bank of Edgerton, 102 N. Main St., during regular banking hours. An opening reception date and time will be announced by the Sesquicentennial committee.

Free Concerts in Edgerton's Central Park:

Wed., June 11, 6:30pm--Chris Plata

Wed., July 9, 6:30pm--Dang Its

Wed., Aug. 13, 6:30pm--Ladies Must Swing

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## POTTERY: IT'S EVERYWHERE

### By Tim Zinkgraf

*Wherein the WPA's webmaster, Tim Zinkgraf, becomes the WPA's intrepid reporter: Tim recently stumbled upon a pottery goldmine on the streets of Detroit! We thank him for this special report on Pewabic Pottery Tiles in Detroit's PeopleMover train stations.*

You never know where you'll find pottery! While looking for information on Detroit and the North American International Auto Show, I was looking at the Detroit PeopleMover web site (Detroit's elevated train) and something caught my eye. I clicked on a link for one of the stations, which happened, to my surprise, to have tile from the Pewabic Pottery. The tile was in storage for a Stroh Brewery that was never built.

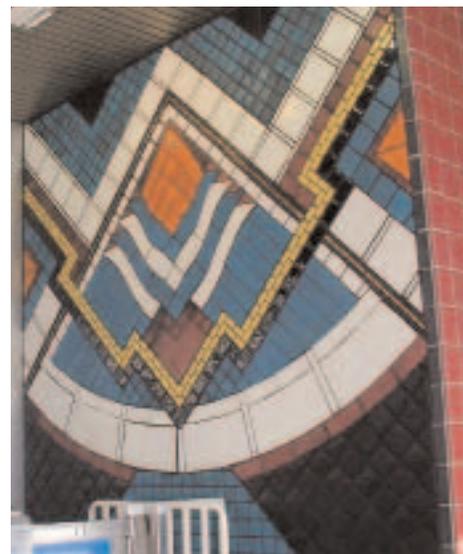
<<http://www.thepeoplemover.com/stationart11.htm>>, "Cadillac Center Station". The following text is borrowed from the above web site: "All of the green tiles you see were actually made in 1935 by Mary Chase Stratton at Pewabic Pottery. The green tiles were commissioned by the Stroh family for a new brewery that eventually was never built. The tiles were put in storage until 1985 when Peter Stroh donated them for use in the Art in the

Stations project. The artist incorporated all of the green tiles into her design of archways with the end result being the beautiful murals you see now. All of the tiles inside of the archways are new tiles. However, the artist made these new tiles from historic molds that were made in 1926. In fact, the original workers tiles made from these molds were installed in Northern High School back in 1929." As noted at the web site, this station was dedicated to tile maker Mary Chase Stratton.

The following text accompanies the tiles at station 1: "Good example of the historic murals created at Pewabic. Very art deco,



Cadillac Center Station arch, composed of tiles made by Mary Chase Stratton.



Tom Phardel, Pewabic Pottery, designed the Times Square Station tiles. but with a modern look. Art Deco is a style of art that was first popular in the early part of this century. Features bold colors and straight lines as well as simple curved lines in the design. This piece also incorporates the turquoise colored tiles and historic glaze for which Pewabic is known. W. Hawkins Ferry, the person in whose honor this art piece is named, was a Detroit Architect, philanthropist, and a member of our Art in the Stations Commission."

See

[www.wisconsinpottery.org](http://www.wisconsinpottery.org)  
for more information, photos, links.

## A NORTH CAROLINA WINTER RESPITE

By Betty and David Knutzen

*The Knutzens, founding member of the Wisconsin Pottery Association, were determined to find fresh sources of pottery, or at least see some nice pieces, and, we can assume, were also looking for some sunshine and warm weather. By driving to North Carolina in February, they managed to find the pottery alright, and apparently all the snow that has been missing from Wisconsin this year! Here is their story.*

In February, hoping to break up the winter doldrums and find some snow, we decided to head for the Arts and Crafts Show held at the Grove Park Inn in Asheville, N.C. On the way we found many places to stop and shop in Indiana, Illinois, Ohio, Kentucky and Tennessee. We also found a lot of snow since they were having near record snowfalls thru the middle of the country.

We had just been studying our new North



A.R. Cole vases purchased in North Carolina.

Carolina Pottery book so we were hot on the trail of some good N.C. pottery. Although we weren't too knowledgeable about what to look for we did stumble onto a very nice, large porch vase made by A.R.Cole. We weren't sure of its age or value and had many second thoughts after we bought it that we had paid too much. So we headed for the A.R.Cole Pottery in Sanford, N.C. to see if we could find out more about the vase and whether we had made a mistake.

We finally found the small pottery which is now run by A.R.'s 74 year old daughter, Neolia, and his grandson, Kenneth George. They were delightful and spent several hours talking to us about our pot, A.R., the history of the pottery and their present operation. They told us that our pot was thrown by A.R. between 1941 and 1961 when the first of several fires destroyed the stamp used on our pot. They said it was one of the finest pieces of A.R.'s work they had seen and that it was worth more than we had paid. We thanked them for

the information, bought several of their contemporary pieces and headed back to Asheville thru a driving rain. At the Arts and Crafts Show we were able to purchase another A.R.Cole large porch vase.

The show had an amazing amount of both old and new arts and crafts era furniture, textiles, paper and pottery items. Pottery such as



A Smithfield Rebecca jug.

Newcomb, Grueby, SEG, etc. that we do not normally see and the prices were also out of sight. We saw the Ephraim potters and Eric Olson, both had very nice displays of their wares and said they had done well at the show. We also visited the North Carolina Pottery Museum in Seagrove and the Pisgah Forest Pottery near Arden. We had a wonderful trip and learned some more about the North Carolina pottery tradition. We also saw more snow than Wisconsin had all winter!

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*Editor's Note: The WPA Press is always looking for a good story to print. Send your trip reports and digital photos to the WPA Press, in care of the Wisconsin Pottery Association at the address on page 1 of this newsletter.*

- Kari Kenefick, Editor, WPA Press

## ROSEMEADE POTTERY

By Linda and Bill Bakken

*Linda and Bill Bakken visited the Wisconsin Pottery Association in March 2003 and gave a delightful presentation on Rosemeade Pottery.*



North Dakota's Rosemeade Pottery, well-connected to the University of North Dakota's ceramics department, was a relatively large company in its day, with as many as 27 employees. Rosemeade is said to have turned out 1,400 pieces a day at its peak. The company grew out of the Wahpeton Pottery Company, Wahpeton, N.D., under the direction of ND native Laura Taylor, who founded the pottery in 1940 with her husband-to-be, Robert J. Hughes.

Laura Taylor was a student and assistant, in the late 1930s, at the University of North Dakota (UND) where famed ceramist (and Minnesota native) Margaret Cable taught from 1910–49. Taylor also studied with the well-known studio potter Glen Lukens at the State University Teachers College in Valley City, North Dakota, and was a supervisor for the Federal Clay project of the Works Progress Administration from 1936–39. She was chosen by the WPA to demonstrate throwing pottery at the New York World's Fair in 1939. As Dr. Marion J. Nelson notes in his book "Art Pottery of the Midwest", Taylor was apparently adept at throwing pottery, but Rosemeade's only thrown pieces were small flower vases along with a few

swirled pieces.

The Bakkens told of a 1951 article in National Geographic that featured North Dakota and included Laura Taylor Hughes, perhaps in part because she was known to use animal photos from that magazine as models for her pieces.

Marion Nelson determined that Rosemeade had some qualities unusual to figurines, that earned it the label of American art pottery. The colors of the pieces appear to have been applied with metal oxides under the glaze, a technique seldom found in figurines. The colors partially combined with the glaze and ran slightly during firing, creating a true ceramic effect. In addition, the buff color of the clay shows through, making the colors blend nicely.

Rosemeade pottery is often identified by the Rosemeade sticker or label, although Linda and Bill report sometimes finding these stickers on non-Rosemeade pieces. As well, some pieces did not get labels. The pieces are also sometimes marked on the bottom, with stamps done in dark blue or black ink. There are a few embossed marks a well. The clay for Rosemeade Pottery is often a sandy, beige color (N.D. clay) but some pieces are done in red clay too, "imported" from Kentucky. The swirl pieces have glaze on the inside, which is clear, blue or brown. A bottom stamp is the best way to identify these pieces.

The "tail-up" pheasant is the most common, best-known piece. The Bakkens received this pheasant piece as a wedding gift, although Linda admits that it stayed in the cupboard for their first 15 years of wedded bliss, because they thought it was so tacky.



Now, as devoted Rosemeade collectors, she suggests that perhaps the moral is that Rosemeade pottery grows on you.

The animal figurines made by Rosemeade run the gamut: pheasants, horses, ducks, quail, chickens, bluebirds, robins, songbirds with perching stance. There were also fish figurines and cats done in unusual positions. The state flower of ND, the prairie rose, was used to decorate pin dishes, salt and peppers and spoon rests. Tulips decorate cream and sugars, salt and peppers, etc. Anne K, a friend of Laura T. Hughes, did some decorating—some of the pieces were marked Wahpeton, ND—she painted shoes and a few hearts, using a mark of "AK".

Rosemeade Pottery was sold throughout the U.S., although concentrated in the upper midwest. Laura Taylor Hughes died in 1959 and the Rosemeade plant closed in 1961. According to the Bakkens, prices of Rosemeade have decreased in the past four years, although prices have stabilized recently.

Rosemeade collections available for viewing include: Wahpeton at the Richland County Museum and, soon to open, a collection at Bonanzaville, west of Fargo, ND.

[www.ndpcs.org](http://www.ndpcs.org) for more information on North Dakota Potteries

# OHIO ART POTTERY—TO HAVE AND TO HOLD

By Kari Kenefick

Into the business of editing a newsletter, some writing of content must fall. When asked recently what this Spring 2003 *WPA Press* was featuring, I listed several items, to which my interviewer replied "I thought it had an Ohio pottery focus." As all editors know, finding a writer for any focus is not an easy task.

Now, to clear things up, Ohio pottery should be included in this newsletter, because the Wisconsin Pottery Association expends a good deal of effort every twelve months dreaming up a lovely exhibit for our annual Show and Sale. More accurately, the exhibit dreamed up, and then painstakingly stitched together by a few devoted founding club members, and, hopefully their newer counterparts, known herein as the "flunkees". Note that in this case, flunkee is not the worst situation to be in, because when invaluable fragile ceramics is at stake, flunkees are not allowed to do the bulk of the work of positioning pieces for an exhibit (unlike most flunkee-ed situations). It's too dangerous to let the uninitiated get their hands on irreplaceable wares. Only our senior club members are allowed the opportunity to break things. And so it should be; I'm guessing they have more experience in breakage than we the uninitiated have.

I digress. The Wisconsin Pottery Association (WPA) is sponsoring, as the following article notes, their annual **August Show and Sale**, this year celebrating the pottery of Ohio. And yes, Tim Z. (who will remain unnamed), this newsletter should thus feature Ohio pottery! We want people to be thinking about and planning to attend this August 23, 2003 event in Madison, WI, and if we speak on the merits of the subject at hand, if we "build it" perhaps they will come.

So without further ado, I give you "Ohio Pottery--To Have and To Hold".

To begin, I lean on our late and learned friend Dr. Marion John Nelson, who in his book "Art Pottery of the Midwest" notes Ohio's "leading position" in the midwestern American art pottery movement. Indeed, one can easily count Ohio's potteries: Roseville, Rookwood, Peters and Reed, McCoy and Cowan, to name a few.

Why Ohio? The abundance of good quality clay was certainly a factor leading to the development of a ceramics industry, as well as the unique collaborations between artists and industrialists that Nelson says characterizes American art pottery. In a number of Ohio cities potteries already existed for the production of utility wares and these potteries presented young ceramic artists with jobs and an industry in which to display their talents. The location on major waterways also made shipping a simple matter. These already-in-place potteries were ready practically and business-wise to feed the demand for art pottery. The utility wares allowed potteries the business stability to venture into experimental lines of art pottery. This combination of smart, experienced ceramics business people, combined with location and high-quality clay, and artists hungry for work, made Ohio prime territory for the American Art Pottery movement.

The stabilizing influence of a utilitarian ceramics base was true for several of the major Ohio art pottery makers, Roseville, Owens and Weller. Roseville's experimental lines such as Della Robbia and Mongol would have been too costly had it not been for the bread-and-butter lines that paid the bills.

There's the Rookwood Pottery, which became a darling of the Art Pottery world while specializing in realistically decorated pieces with soft shading in the underglaze technique, followed by their adoption of the up-and-coming style of undecorated, or incised monochrome shaded matt-glazed

pottery, which remained a staple of Rookwood's line until the 1950s.

Maria Longworth Nichols founded the Rookwood Pottery in Cincinnati, Ohio in an old school house. Early pottery produced included art pottery and utilitarian wares, including some undecorated pieces for amateur decorators. Her father, an arts patron, provided the financial support to keep the pottery open during the early years—the pottery did not make a profit until about 1890.

William Watts Taylor joined the pottery as administrator and partner in 1883. When Longworth Nichols' mother retired from the business in 1890 she sold her interest to Taylor; that year the pottery became a stock company with Taylor as president.

Rookwood gained international recognition by winning a gold medal at the 1889 Exposition in Paris, and a gold medal at the Exposition of American Art Industry in Philadelphia. Business grew rapidly and a new factory overlooking the Ohio River and downtown, near the Cincinnati Art Museum and the Art Academy, was built around 1892.

Rookwood's investment in developing new clays and glazes helped ensure their success; several new lines were introduced in the 1890s, and matt glaze in about 1901.

When Taylor died suddenly in 1913, Joseph Henry Gest was named president. Rookwood survived the depression and WWI, but never had a strong financial period with Gest and in 1934 he resigned. J.D. Wareham replaced Gest and the pottery entered a long period of financial reconstructions and lay-offs. By 1967 there was very little demand for pottery and operations ended. In 1983 Dr. Arthur J. Townley purchased the Rookwood Pottery Company name and molds, but items produced have been limited mostly to paperweights, and products are dated and signed. There reportedly has been no attempt to manufacture articles with the

old Rookwood marks.

The Rookwood marks include an embossed "ROOKWOOD", sometimes an artist's signature, the well-known back-to-back, conjoined Rs with lines radiating from the top, (as if from a light bulb) and sometimes a letter, such as "S" to indicate that the piece was produced during a special dignitary's visit, "V" for vellum or "X" identifying it as a factory second. Also designations for experimental designs and dates were marked.

Wheatley Pottery, founded in Cincinnati by T.J. Wheatley, was the first Ohio pottery to introduce a line of matt green pieces, in direct imitation of Grueby Pottery from Massachusetts. The precise moment of Wheatley's entry into matt green is not known, but it is estimated to have been around 1903-05. Wheatley was considered by many a brash and enterprising man who not only saw the appeal of matt green glaze, but also recognized that the Grueby style of low-relief surface decoration could just as well have been made for casting in a mold, at a time when art pottery makers were seeing the value in mass produce their wares. Designs usually had vertical lines perfect for concealing mold marks and the covering of heavy, textured opaque glaze obscured precise methods of production.

Wheatley played a role in founding the Cincinnati Art Pottery in 1880, as well as T.J. Wheatley and Company, 1880-82, and the Wheatley Pottery Company with Isaac Kahn in 1903.

Molded and molded pieces were created. Wheatley was known to create molds of pieces already known to be desired by the public, capturing a part of the market that could not afford the more expensive originals. Wheatley began to produce garden pottery sometime around 1909, imitating antique forms. His plant was destroyed by fire in 1910 and he continued to manufacture the garden pottery, but it appears that

art pottery production never resumed. By the time Wheatley died in 1917 his efforts were entirely devoted to making faience tiles, garden furniture, bird baths, vases and boxes.

Art pottery pieces from the Wheatley Pottery Company were signed with conjoined WP within a circle, either impressed or on an attached paper label. Architectural and faience products were signed "Wheatley" in block letters or with impressed catalog numbers.

During the time T.J. Wheatley was opening new potteries, Guy Cowan was graduating from college (1907) with a Bachelor's of Science in Ceramic Engineering, and entering the job market. He assumed the title of "boss potter" at the Shenango Pottery Company of New Castle, PA. About this time Shenango decided to enter into the hotel china production business. However, this job was short-lived, as a national depression practically shut the pottery down and Cowan was laid off.

Eventually the right job came along, in Cleveland, Ohio, where Cowan earned a position in a new technical high school in 1908. He was hired to manage clay mixing of and firing. The position allowed him the facilities for experimentation during his free time. And experiment he did, with different firing temperatures, different kiln types and various glaze types, and all combinations of the aforementioned. In the meantime, Cleveland's high school students began to study pottery as part of the regular art curriculum, making it the first of the crafts, as a method of practicing their study of form and applied ornament.

Cowan began making studio pottery in 1909, a natural development growing from his glaze and body tests for the program at East Technical High. In 1913, feeling that the high school ceramics program would do fine without him, and encouraged and backed by people of influence in Cleveland, Cowan opened the Cleveland Pottery and

Tile Company, whose first home was a remodeled bowling alley in Lakewood, Ohio. Cowan enlisted in the Army in 1917 at which time production ceased; however, when he returned in 1919 he immediately reopened the business. The business was relocated in 1921 to Rocky River, Ohio. At this time demand was steadily increasing and marketing was expanded to include many finer retail stores such as Marshall Fields.

Cowan and the talented artists in his employment were among the most award-winning potters of the time. Guy L. Rixford, Arthur Baggs, Alexander Blazys, Thelma Frazier, Jose Martin, Wayland Gregory and Victor Schreckengost all made pottery for Cowan's studio.

In 1927 the company name was changed to Cowan Pottery Studio. At this time the Lakeware line was introduced as an inexpensive product for use mainly by florists. Financial difficulties forced a reorganization in 1929 and the business was changed to Cowan Potters, Inc. However, the Great Depression continued, forcing the company into bankruptcy by the end of 1930. Under court supervision production continued until 1931.

Most Cowan pottery is signed and several marks were used, some of which include "Cowan", LAKEWARE, or "Cowan" combined with the letters "RG", placed above it.

Ah, so much Ohio pottery, so little space to discuss it. The hope is that you've found some interesting information here and that you'll consider joining us in August, in Madison, to actually see these pieces. There are many more Ohio potteries than the several mentioned here, so plenty more to see and learn about. Our August 2003 exhibit will include informational literature and guides that know far more than this author does. The exhibit will also include pottery not mentioned here.

And finally, if you come to see the exhibit, entitled "**Ohio Spectrum**", you can look for, and perhaps purchase your own piece of Ohio pottery, be it McCoy or Rookwood. That would make it your own "Ohio Pottery--To Have *and* to Hold".

For more information please see the Wisconsin Pottery Association's web site, [www.wisconsinpottery.org](http://www.wisconsinpottery.org)

Hope to see you **August 23 in Madison, WI!!**

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## UPCOMING ART POTTERY SHOWS

As noted in the previous article, the **Wisconsin Pottery Association** is holding their **Eighth Annual Show and Sale**, in Madison, WI, August 23, 2003.

The Show and Sale features an exhibit of Ohio Art Pottery entitled "Ohio Spectrum", along with approximately 50 dealers selling collectible art pottery and ceramics. The show and sale will be at the Alliant Energy Center, 1919 Alliant Energy Way, Madison, WI.

Directions: From I-90 take exit 142A, Hwy 12/18, then west 5 miles to Exit 262,

Rimrock Rd., then north 1/4 mile to the Alliant Energy Center.

Show hours are 9AM to 4PM, with set-up Friday night for dealers.

To reserve a booth for selling pottery and ceramics contact:

Jim Tyne, WPA Show Manager  
312 Fairview  
DeKalb, IL 60115  
jtyne@niu.edu  
(815) 758-7829

The American Pottery Earthenware and China, **APEC 26th Annual Pottery Show and Sale** will be held

October 18, 2003,  
9AM-4PM  
at a new location this year:

Lake Co. Fairgrounds--Building 7  
Grayslake, IL

From I94 take Rt. 120 (Belvidere Rd.) west 4.5 miles to fairgrounds just past Rt. 45.

For more information:

Jim and Ellen Tyne  
(815)-758-7829  
jtyne@niu.edu

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*The WPA Press is the quarterly newsletter of the Wisconsin Pottery Association. It prints approximately January, April, July and October of each year. Your contributions are welcomed. Tell us about a museum or antique shop you visited, trips you've taken, or a good pottery book you've read. Send your contributions to:*

**WPA Press**  
**P.O. Box 8213**  
**Madison, WI 53708-8213**

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