Annual Report
Fiscal Year 2015
985,152 guests visited MNHS historic sites and museums

We served 23,967 member households

MNHS Press sold 91,079 print and e-books

THE GALE FAMILY LIBRARY AT THE HISTORY CENTER WELCOMED 29,000 RESEARCHERS

2.4 MILLION PEOPLE VISITED OUR WEBSITE mnhs.org 4.3 MILLION TIMES

We have engaged with 70,000 visitors on mnhs social media platforms

On the cover: We Are Hmong Minnesota opening at the Minnesota History Center, March 7, 2015.
Back cover: 9 Nights of Music at the Minnesota History Center.
FISCAL YEAR 2015 AT A GLANCE

**63,700**
HOURS CONTRIBUTED
more than
2,550 volunteers and interns

**275**
arts and cultural heritage fund grants awarded across Minnesota

**1,506**
new items added to the collection

**61,700**
275 arts and cultural heritage fund grants awarded across Minnesota

**1,506**
new items added to the collection

**Northern Lights student textbook sold 18,995**
print and digital copies

now serving 65%
of Minnesota’s 6th graders

**25,000 students**
participated in National History Day in Minnesota

**25,000 children**
served more than
with free access all year long

**196,819 STUDENTS & chaperones visited on field trips**

up 20% at the History Center
up 18% at the James J. Hill House
FROM THE PRESIDENT

History today is, as it always has been, a powerful force in our world. Elected officials and leaders at all levels and of all persuasions make arguments based on history to justify their positions. Our society today needs, as it always has needed, citizens who know and understand history.

Advancing the knowledge and understanding of history is a key objective of the Minnesota Historical Society. By any number of measurements, MNHS did an excellent job meeting that objective this year. More than 985,000 visitors enjoyed our museums and historic sites, including 196,000 students and chaperones from around the state on school-sponsored trips. Another 25,000 students participated in National History Day in Minnesota, and 44,000 sixth graders used our Northern Lights curriculum. In addition, 91,000 people purchased MNHS Press print and ebooks and 2.4 million people visited mnhs.org.

This year, we engaged with more Minnesotans than ever before, advancing their knowledge and understanding of history, while providing fulfilling, engaging, fun experiences.

MNHS relies upon two great resources to achieve such important results. First is its incredibly talented and dedicated staff, led by Director and CEO Steve Elliott. Second are the citizens of this state, both individually and through elected representatives, who support all MNHS does.

Thank you, Minnesotans, for supporting our future through the Minnesota Historical Society.

William R. Stoeri, President
Reflecting on the past year, we can be proud of the role MNHS plays in shaping and sharing the stories of Minnesota and the nation. A rise in attendance, with significant visitation by new audiences, tells us that we’re delivering programs that are spot on. The exhibit We Are Hmong Minnesota was a true partnership with the Hmong community. Modern Spirit: The Art of George Morrison and Inspiring Beauty: 50 Years of Ebony Fashion Fair further connected diverse audiences with MNHS. The results are dramatic; nearly one of every five guests visiting the History Center this summer self-identified as non-white, an increase from fewer than one in ten the previous fall.

Expanding the stories we tell and reaching new audiences are also our goals at Historic Fort Snelling. By telling the many stories of this area, B’dote, we know that more and more people from Minnesota—and across the globe—will find a connection to this unique place. We need to share fully the stories of American Indian people—stories that date back thousands of years—and of enslaved and free African Americans and Buffalo soldiers, and of the Japanese American soldiers who trained there in World War II. We want to explore larger historic themes that are still relevant today: cultural conflict and the struggle for power, human rights, and the yearning for freedom.

We also know that the fort’s visitor center and amenities are desperately in need of renovation. The Governor and the Minnesota State Legislature agree. Even though this was not a bonding year, the legislature appropriated $500,000 for predesign, a signal that it values and supports our vision and trusts our responsible stewardship of the state’s landmarks. Further design and construction will be part of a $34 million request in the upcoming 2016 legislative session; an additional $12 million will be raised through private funding.

Now we need your help. Let us know what you would like to see in a rejuvenated Fort Snelling. Let our public officials know that this is an important undertaking that merits priority attention. Visit mnhs.org/rememberfortsnelling and share your ideas and experiences of what Historic Fort Snelling means to you.

The dedication and expertise of our staff and volunteers enable us to deliver ever better outcomes year after year. From full-time employees to part-time interpreters, more than 2,500 volunteers, and our Executive Council members, each person’s commitment to MNHS is reflected in our values: stewardship and service, innovation and resourcefulness, integrity, inclusivity and collaboration.

Personifying those values is Bill Stoeri, who is completing his term as Executive Council president. Bill has contributed more than 12 years to the Executive Council, 6 years as president, steering MNHS through a difficult economic downturn and leading the organization in defining new strategic priorities. As past president, Bill will remain on the Executive Council, serving alongside new president Phyllis Goff, who brings leadership and governance experience with for-profit businesses and non-profit educational and arts organizations, and noted historian and educator Bill Green, who will serve as vice president.

Through history, we make a difference, sometimes transformational, in the lives of many people. This week, a frequent visitor told me, “I just realized history isn’t history, the way I’ve always thought about it. It’s about today—and tomorrow!”

I love these “a-ha!” moments. Thank you for making them possible.

D. Stephen Elliott, Director and CEO
ATTENDANCE AND MEMBERSHIP

Visitation at MNHS historic sites and museums was 985,152, up 17% over last year. This rise was due in part to two new attendance streams: new trail count technology totaling 28,213 visitors at Birch Coulee Battlefield, Lac qui Parle Mission, Marine Mill and the Forest History Center; and 111,520 visitors to the Mill City Farmers Market, sponsored by Mill City Museum. When accounting for the trail counts, farmers market and the Minnesota State Capitol being closed for construction, attendance is still up significantly, by 8% over last year.

196,819 students and chaperones visited MNHS sites on field trips, down 13% across all locations due to the Capitol closure, but up 20% at the History Center and up 18% at the James J. Hill House.

Online visitation grew by 23% with 4.3 million visits by 2.4 million unique visitors. And nearly 70,000 followers engaged with us across our social media platforms, an increase of 40% over last year.

Membership ended the year with 23,967 households and a 5% increase in revenue, with strong growth in teacher memberships which now make up 7% of our overall membership base.
DIVERSITY & INCLUSIVENESS

Diversity is part of every program at MNHS, but this year it took center stage. The History Center saw an 11% increase in attendance and a dramatic shift in demographics with more people self-identifying as non-white, due in large part to dynamic new exhibits and programs.

The year began with the Toys of the 50s, 60s and 70s exhibit which set a new record for summer attendance, then closed strong, exceeding attendance goals and drawing multigenerational families.

Community engagement was extended with exhibits including Modern Spirit: The Art of George Morrison, presented in partnership with the Minnesota Museum of American Art, Arts Midwest and the Plains Arts Museum; and Inspiring Beauty: 50 Years of Ebony Fashion Fair, which opened with a sold-out VIP event sponsored by Target, followed by a public party and fashion show emceed by Robyne Robinson.

But it was We Are Hmong Minnesota that pioneered a new model for exhibits, where community participation was brought to a partnership level. The exhibit was developed by members of the Hmong community working alongside MNHS staff. The highly successful exhibit saw more than 3,500 people attend on opening day, 75% of whom self-identified as Asian/Pacific. Dignitaries who attended included Sen. Foung Hawj, Col. Ly Teng, and Congresswoman Betty McCollum.

Popular family programs continued to attract diverse crowds including family days for Dakota/Ojibwe, Day of the Dead, Kwanzaa and Asian Pacific Heritage. And the Blues Vision book launch earned positive feedback from members of Minnesota’s African American community. In addition, the History Center’s limited income program was expanded to MNHS historic sites and museums, making it easier for people of all economic means to visit.

Overall History Center attendance shifted from 8% self-identifying as non-white during the run of Toys to nearly 20% by the summer opening of Inspiring Beauty.

COLLECTIONS

A new MNHS blog on the Huffington Post launched to bring the MNHS collection to national audiences; the Civil War Daybook ended its run with a record of more than 32,000 followers; collection videos on YouTube continued to be popular, with more than 100,000 views; and images of more than 2,000 objects were digitized and made available online. The Native American Artist-in-Residence program welcomed its first group of artists: Jessica Gokey, Pat Kruse and Gwen Westerman; and the Somali Oral History Project completed 48 interviews.

This year 1,506 items were added to the collection including Imprint 35, an acrylic painting depicting a peaceful Midwestern scene by Teo Nguyen; Lac des Pleurs, a fine art book about Lake Pepin by Gaylord Schanilec; guitar and stage costume used by Jan Kuehnemund of the all-female 1980s rock band Vixen; the manuscript collections of Lucille “Lou” H. Murray, a burlesque and vaudevillian performer in the 1920s and 30s; photographs from various donors of veterans who served in Korea, Vietnam, the Persian Gulf and Afghanistan; and draft board lists of eligible Sibley County residents from 1917 and 1918.

LIBRARY

The Gale Family Library at the History Center welcomed 29,000 in-person and correspondence research requests, up 9% from last year, and supported additional researchers through the creation of video tutorials and new finding aids. The new Legacy Research Fellowship made four awards this year, which supported research on the Progressive Era in Minneapolis, the history of tuberculosis in Minnesota sanatoriums, Minnesota social history as told through cookbooks, and ethnic commemorations on the Iron Range. Family history classes, a joint venture with the Minnesota Genealogical Society, experienced a 100% increase in attendance as a result of improved promotion.
EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT AND LIFELONG LEARNING

The new digital version of *Northern Lights*, combined with the print edition, sold 18,995 copies and represents the textbook of choice for 65% of Minnesota’s 6th graders. The award-winning *Play the Past* mobile game earned a prestigious grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) to expand into other MNHS exhibits, including *Minnesota’s Greatest Generation*. And a new curriculum kit debuted based on the lives of Dred and Harriet Scott.

New programs for student populations included outreach to Northland Community School in Remer and Washington Technology Magnet School in St. Paul. At Washington Tech, students visited historic sites in Northern Minnesota on a new overnight fieldtrip, and the school held 6th-grade parent-teacher conferences at the History Center, where families visited the *We Are Hmong Minnesota* exhibit.

Two St. Paul students, Pa Ying Lor and Siena Leone-Getten, earned a gold medal and a History Channel prize for their short film about Civil Rights leader Ella Baker at the National History Day competition in Washington, D.C. In all, 11 entries from Minnesota took home awards, with 60 students competing at nationals. More than 25,000 students participated in Minnesota History Day at school, regional and state levels.

Innovative outreach programs for lifelong learners included special private hours in the History Center exhibit galleries for families dealing with autism; an increase in MNHS staff who are certified as “Dementia Friends” and who lead tours for people with memory loss and their caregivers; and Minnesota Regional Library partnership programs around the state.

▲ The late David Larson (far right) and MNHS Executive Council member Bob Bruininks (fourth from right) with University of Minnesota undergraduate History Day mentors. Major funding for National History Day in Minnesota is provided in part by the David and Janis Larson Foundation.
HISTORIC FORT SNELLING

Today, MNHS is poised to develop Historic Fort Snelling into a compelling international destination that presents the many stories of the area over thousands of years of history. The site went through a master planning process which produced an overall concept vision that will drive the revitalization of both facilities and programs. In the 2015 legislative session, the state appropriated $500,000 to MNHS for predesign for the first phase of the project. Phase I includes the renovation of Building 18, a historic cavalry barracks, to create a new visitor center; demolition of the current visitor center and landscaping of vacated space; enhanced wayfinding; and creation of new exhibits and other amenities inside the visitor center. MNHS is requesting an additional $34 million from the state during the 2016 session for design and construction. Working in tandem with the state, MNHS plans to raise an additional $12 million from individuals, corporations and foundations for this public-private partnership. Phase I is scheduled to be ready by 2020.

OLIVER KELLEY FARM

A groundbreaking ceremony was held at the Oliver Kelley Farm to thank legislators and donors for their support for the revitalization project to expand education programs and build a new visitor center and farm support buildings. Once complete, the new farm will be able to accommodate the growing number of Minnesotans coming to learn about farming and food in the past, present and future. Construction is now underway with an expected opening date of Spring, 2017.
HISTORIC SITES & MUSEUMS

Attendance increased at several sites including Mill City Museum, up 12%; Split Rock Lighthouse, up 13%; James J. Hill House, up 14%; and Mille Lacs Indian Museum and Trading Post, up 18%, due in part to better tracking of Trading Post-only visitation. Jeffers Petroglyphs saw a 2% increase in attendance overall and a whopping 368% increase on the site’s opening day, following outreach to American Indian groups and regional media.

MNHS historic sites and museums undertook numerous partnerships this year including Camp Breathe Easy with the Grand Itasca Clinic, a one-day naturalist field trip at the Forest History Center for children suffering from asthma; the launch of the new “Hennepin Island Hydropower Tour” at Mill City Museum, developed in partnership with Xcel Energy and featuring rare access to the Hennepin Island Hydro Plant; and an exhibit at Historic Fort Snelling called “Japanese Americans in the Military Intelligence Service during World War II,” which was developed in partnership with the National Japanese American Historical Society.

STATEWIDE PRESERVATION

The Minnesota Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit celebrated a milestone this year with its fifth anniversary. Fourteen projects were completed receiving nearly $57 million in credits. To date more than $118 million in tax credits or grants-in-lieu-of-credits have been awarded, preserving dozens of historic structures for future generations.

Through a state appropriation, MNHS provided $385,000 in capital preservation project grants, and through a federal appropriation from the National Park Service, Department of the Interior, MNHS awarded $64,106 in Certified Local Government grants. The Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund (ACHF) provided more than $6 million through 275 grants awarded across Minnesota.

Statewide asset preservation included the rehabilitation of the Ayer Tourist Cottage at Mille Lacs Indian Museum and Trading Post. The cottage now features a library, offices and program use room. Preservation work was also done at Wood Lake Monument, Charles A. Lindbergh Historic Site, Mille Lacs Indian Museum and Trading Post, Comstock House, Forest History Center and the Cavalry Barrack Buildings 17 and 18 at Historic Fort Snelling.

A new tour at Jeffers Petroglyphs showcases a small handful of the 3,000 newly uncovered petroglyphs, their stories and the significance the red rock played in American Indian spiritual life and oral tradition.
NATIONAL REGISTER

Thirteen properties were added to the National Register of Historic Places:

- Pine River to Woman Lake and Longville Stagecoach Road, Widow Lake Segment Historic District, vicinity of Hackensack, Cass County;
- Anna J. Scofield Memorial Auditorium and Harold E. Thorson Memorial Library, Elbow Lake, Grant County;
- First Presbyterian Church of Oak Grove Cemetery, Bloomington, Hennepin County;
- Prospect Park Residential Historic District, Minneapolis, Hennepin County;
- Noerenberg Estate Barn, Orono, Hennepin County;
- Hokah Municipal Building, Hokah, Houston County;
- Bridge No. 4969 (Camp Ripley Bridge), Ripley and Green Prairie Townships, Morrison County;
- Worthington Band Shell, Worthington, Nobles County;
- Sacred Heart Public School, Sacred Heart, Renville County;
- Owatonna Commercial Historic District, Owatonna, Steele County;
- Duluth Masonic Temple, Duluth, St. Louis County;
- Ely State Theater, Ely, St. Louis County; and the
- 3M Administration Building (Building 21), St. Paul, Ramsey County

MNHS PRESS

It was a milestone year for the MNHS Press with the publication of the first digital edition and tablet app of Minnesota History—just in time for the magazine’s 100th anniversary. MNHS Press had a dramatic increase in overall sales, ending the year with a 17% increase in revenue over last year and more than 91,079 print and e-books sold. Top book sales included Minnesota’s Own, Stolen from the Garden and Rhoda’s Rock Hunt. Top award winners included Her Honor: Rosalie Wahl and the Minnesota Women’s Movement; Rhoda’s Rock Hunt; Curiosity’s Cats: Writers on Research; and My Grandfather’s Knocking Sticks.

MNopedia, the encyclopedia of Minnesota history, continued to gain in popularity with 368,262 views by 129,625 different users, a 51% increase over last year.
SUSTAINABILITY & STEWARDSHIP

Sustainability efforts are paying off. An NEH implementation grant, coupled with matching funds from the state, will improve energy efficient cold storage. The result will be that delicate artifacts like film and negatives will last two to four times longer while saving MNHS $16,000 a year in energy costs. Other milestones include a 50% reduction in energy use at the History Center resulting in a savings of $1.8 million in related costs since 2008 and the implementation of more than 20 projects at historic sites that will save $17,000 per year in energy bills.

ARCHAEOLOGY

Field research was conducted in more than 25 counties throughout Minnesota. Major projects included extensive excavations at a prehistoric site on Albert Lea Lake in Freeborn County and the identification of multiple ancient habitation sites in Minneopa State Park near Mankato. Archaeological research was also conducted at several MNHS historic sites, including Lower Sioux Agency, Sibley Historic Site, Birch Coulee Battlefield and Charles A. Lindbergh Historic Site. A major project to inventory and describe archaeological collections from Historic Fort Snelling continued, and student and professional archaeologists conducted research in the MNHS archaeological collections.

2015 LEGISLATIVE HIGHLIGHTS

The 2015 legislative session provided great support for the work of the Minnesota Historical Society and history partners statewide. The general fund operating budget, which provides a significant base of support for MNHS operations included compensation adjustment for staff. The state’s Legacy Amendment, through the Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund (ACHF), provides funding for statewide programs operated by MNHS. Additional funding from the ACHF supports the Historic and Cultural Heritage Grants program which enables history-minded organizations across the state to preserve and share our state’s history. Finally, the 2015 Capital Budget bill provided funding for predesign for the Historic Fort Snelling Visitor Center project, which will allow planning for this major project to continue.
As a nonprofit, we serve the people of Minnesota. Our annual budget of about $60 million comes from three sources that work together to bring the public vibrant, crucial programs and services: private funding, earned revenue and public funding, including significant funding from the State of Minnesota.

Public funds, including funding from the State’s general fund, provide a foundation of support and enable us to leverage non-public funds to create a nationally recognized history program. Typically, two thirds of our funding comes from the State of Minnesota. We deliver functions designated by law, such as preserving historic landmarks and resources, managing critical records and collections and operating cultural destinations important to tourism. State support also includes capital funding to preserve historic buildings and construct new ones, as well as Legacy Amendment (Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund) support for new, statewide history programs, including grants for local history organizations. Federal dollars support historic preservation programs mandated by federal law.

The Minnesota Historical Society also receives support from donors and members. Their gifts support everything from general operations and school field trips to important acquisitions, conservation work and community outreach. Endowment funds give MNHS strength for today and tomorrow. Finally, earned revenue from rental events, museum stores, admission fees, publication sales and many other activities also provide a base of funding while keeping history accessible and at family-friendly prices.
### Condensed Balance Sheet

**As of June 30, 2015**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Unrestricted</th>
<th>Temporarily restricted</th>
<th>Permanently restricted</th>
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<td>Operating</td>
<td>Plant fund</td>
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<td><strong>Cash and investments</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Receivables</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Property and equipment net</strong></td>
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<td>20,921</td>
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<td><strong>Total liabilities and net assets</strong></td>
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<td>9,885</td>
<td>21,892</td>
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### Statement of Activities

**Year ended June 30, 2015**

**SUPPORT AND REVENUE:**

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<td>Private contributions</td>
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<td>Sale of collection items</td>
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<td>Federal grants</td>
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<td>County and other grants</td>
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<td>State operating appropriation</td>
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<td>State legacy appropriation</td>
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<td>State capital appropriation</td>
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<td><strong>Revenue:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Admission fees</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>2,678</td>
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<td>Museum store sales</td>
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<td>Publication sales</td>
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<td>Rental, parking, food services</td>
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<td>Other sales, fees and memberships</td>
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<td><strong>Total revenue</strong></td>
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<td>(37,605)</td>
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<td><strong>Total support, revenue and net assets released from program restrictions</strong></td>
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<td>603</td>
<td>243</td>
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**EXPENSES:**

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<td><strong>Program services:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Library collections and archival services</td>
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<td>Publications</td>
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<td>Historic sites</td>
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<td>History Center museum and education</td>
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<td>Education outreach and preservation</td>
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<td>Management and general</td>
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<td>1,506</td>
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<td>57,579</td>
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**Net increase (decrease) in net assets**

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<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Unrestricted</th>
<th>Temporarily restricted</th>
<th>Permanently restricted</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Net assets at beginning of year</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Net assets at end of year</strong></td>
<td>$6,370</td>
<td>77,708</td>
<td>9,885</td>
<td>90,063</td>
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