

FRIENDS OF

# Florham

## SARAH SULLIVAN LOUNGE TRANSFORMED

This year, when the Friends of Florham were planning renovations in the teleconference room named after Sarah Sullivan, Christopher Johnson, owner of Hollister Construction and an FDU alumnus, offered to donate the labor and materials to effect the renovation. And the transformation is breathtaking, totally stunning as you can see from the pictures.

Sarah Sullivan was part of the Twombly staff who stayed on after Fairleigh Dickinson purchased the estate, and who became a much beloved University personality. Sarah influenced and assisted many alumni especially Chris Johnson, who also grew up next door to her. As a teen-

ager, Chris mowed her lawn and shoveled snow for Sarah and her sister. Sarah was the person who watched out for

added to the off-set area at the end of the room, and we hung traditional wooden blinds at the windows. In addition, the conference table was restored, and the carpet cleaned.

The most visually stunning additions are the framed copies of the McKim, Mead & White architectural drawings for the estate. Linda Meister, Friends president, and Suzy oversaw the reproduction of the drawings and had them framed in beau-

tiful gold frames. The result is a spectacular set of images set against the newly painted blue walls.

This renovation was such a tremendous transformation; it has inspired us to continue our efforts with renewed enthusiasm. The Friends, and the University, are especially grateful to Chris Johnson for his heartwarming desire to honor his former mentor, friend and neighbor, Sarah Sullivan, in this way. We appreciated the effective leadership and attention to detail from his management team and the high quality of workmanship from his workmen. Hollister was a wonderful group for us to work with on every aspect of the project.

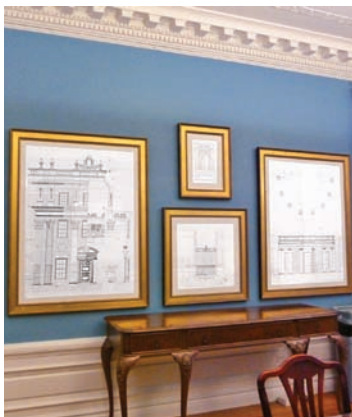


BEFORE

AFTER

Chris when his parents traveled, and became more a part of his extended family than neighbor. Chris tells fond stories of her tolerance for his adolescent escapades and credits her insistence that he rebuild a fence his friends destroyed as his initial construction project.

Suzy Moran, member of the Friends of Florham board, suggested the project and made the design decisions. Friends of Florham worked with Dick Frick from the University to coordinate with Chris and his team, Jack Pross and Vincent Renda, painted the room whippie blue and the trim linen white. The windows were repaired, the drapes cleaned and re-hung in a more appropriate style, sconces were



FRAMED ARCHITECTURAL PRINTS FROM MCKIM, MEAD & WHITE'S DRAWINGS

### FALL 2011

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## PRESIDENT'S LETTER

We began our yearly activities last fall with a lecture on Hurstmont, the iconic Stanford White house in nearby Harding Township. Janet Foster, historic preservationist, and Barbara Brennan, author, spoke about the abandoned home to an interested audience in Lenfell Hall. Nothing happened that day, but in early winter, Hurstmont was finally purchased by a group of investors that included our friend, architect Peter Dorne. Now, one of the last works of Stanford White has a chance for survival.



PETER DORNE AT LECTURE

In our desire to find out more about the men hired by the Twomblys to design "Florham," our spring lecture featured Moseette Broderick, author of *Triumvirate: McKim, Mead & White*. Professor Broderick is widely acknowledged for her research on this famous architectural firm, and treated us to a fast-paced, informative talk. We hope to have her back by "popular demand,"

as the community has expressed considerable interest on the subject.

Friends of Florham, under the guidance of board member, Suzy Moran, undertook the re-decoration of a small office near

Hartman Lounge. We placed furnishings and memorabilia from the estate of Walter Savage in the room. This intimate meeting room is now a pleasant reminder of Professor Savage and his dedication to learning and to the history of the university.

The success of this project led us to the next room, the Sarah Sullivan Lounge, former breakfast room of the Twomblys. Sarah Sullivan was a much beloved administrator in the early days of FDU. Time had taken its toll and the room was sadly in need of refurbishment. Chris Johnson, CEO, Hollister Construction Services, an FDU alumnus and a great admirer of Miss Sullivan, offered the services of his company to restore the lounge. Again, with the help of Suzy Moran, the project is now complete. The historical highlight of this project is the copying, printing and reframing of the 1897 McKim, Mead & White architectural renderings of Florham. The room is finished, and they are mounted on its walls.

Just as we undertook the planning for this project, Wendy Burden, great-great-granddaughter of the mansion's builder, Florence Vanderbilt Twombly, advised Friends of Florham that she was donating many of her great-great-grandmother's possessions to FDU. Before we knew it, the boxes were on their way to Florham. Many of the items are now on display in a recently acquired breakfront in the Great Hall. The exhibit has generated an amazing amount of interest among students, visitors and faculty.

Ms. Burden's donation also augmented our collection of Twombly household papers. This is proving to be quite helpful, as Friends of Florham is currently funding two books on the history of the estate: one a picture book suitable as a gift and the other the first history of Florham: from



THE NEW WALL

design and building, to residence by the Twombly family, to the transition and preservation of the estate as the current College at Florham. In combination with the Historic Landscape Preservation project — now nearing completion — these papers provide a unique glimpse into "Florham's" past.

Over the summer, we began attending to details in the Great Hall, including the reframing of the large historic Moulton oil painting, which has long occupied one of the walls. The two small sofas and four upholstered chairs were recovered in period-appropriate fabric selected to withstand the heavy use by students and guests. By October 15, the hall will be ready for one of the prettiest events of the year, the Friends of Florham Gala.

We could not accomplish these many projects without your generosity. Thank you so very much!

— Linda Meister



SUZY MORAN ADJUSTING DRAPES

**BUCKY PIZZARELLI TRIO**  
**AT THE**  
**FALL GALA**  
**SATURDAY, OCTOBER 15, 2011**  
**7 P.M., HENNESSY HALL**  
**COLLEGE AT FLORHAM**  
**FAIRLEIGH DICKINSON UNIVERSITY**



# FLORHAM HEIRLOOMS RETURN HOME

With each passing year and each new achievement, the initial vision of the founders of the Friends of Florham becomes ever more impressive. This year's gift from Wendy Burden — the great-great-granddaughter of Florence Vanderbilt Twombly and Hamilton McKown Twombly — of a treasure trove of heirlooms and papers from Florham, is of monumental importance to the Friends of Florham, to the University and to historians of the Gilded Age.

Wendy Burden is the author of *Dead End Gene Pool: A Memoir*, a book about her family published last year and featured in a long article in *The New York Times*. In her memoir, Wendy describes in charming and humorous detail her return to Florham in 1964 as a young girl. The entourage included Wendy's great-grandmother, Florence, who was Florence and Hamilton's daughter and had grown up at Florham; Wendy's grandparents, Peggy and William Burden; and her brother and uncle. On a beautiful April morning, they walked through the mansion and had a picnic lunch on the stone terrace overlooking the fountain and gardens.

It was not until last spring, more than 45 years after this visit that Wendy, who lives in Oregon, returned to Florham. "I wandered around for a while and then got the nerve up to ask someone if I could look upstairs because my family used to live there." On her tour, she learned of the work of the Friends of Florham and saw some of the projects the Friends have already completed. Later in the year, when she moved from a very large house to a loft, a thought struck her: "I knew there was a reason I've been hoarding Vanderbilt and Twombly and Burden relics all my life. Somebody

had to be the custodian, and now I know why I was born female; so I could salvage all I could from my tradition-eschewing, modernist grandparents — under the guise of it being for future generations — and return it to the ol' homestead."

In Shirley Burden's book, *The Vanderbilts in My Life*, there is a wonderfully evocative photograph he took of Florham's Great Hall, with half-packed barrels and crates containing heirlooms the Burden family was taking from the mansion before the Parke-Bernet on-premises auction in June of 1955.

Now, 56 years later, a UPS truck brought home boxes from Wendy filled with Florham treasures: a backgammon table; ostrich fans of Florence and Ruth Twombly; boxes of linens, including linen hand towels, monogrammed "RVT" (Ruth Vanderbilt Twombly); and monogrammed sheets, napkins, tablecloths, doilies, runners and satin bedcovers. There were silver chafing dishes, flower-show trophies from 1930 and 1931, a cut-crystal trophy from the Morristown Field Club Horse Show of 1907 for First Prize in Ladies Saddle Horse, an 18K gold-rimmed luncheon service with the Twombly monogram in gold, crystal stemware with gold-leaf rim and the Twombly monogram, 50 white-wine glasses, 50 red-wine glasses, a mahogany humidor and a clock with Hamilton Twombly's initials.

Under the direction of Friend's president, Linda Meister, a group of Friends volunteers carefully opened each box, cataloging and recording each item. The Friends purchased a beautiful breakfront to display many of these treasures, now located in the Great Hall of the mansion.

Other pieces will be stored until it is decided how they may best be displayed.



Along with these treasures were some pieces of the written records of Florham, which promise to be an important research tool for historians interested in how life was lived in the Gilded Age.

Among these records are work orders with the architectural firm of McKim, Mead & White dated February 6, 1896, and signed  
*(continued on page 4)*



BREAKFRONT DISPLAYING FLORHAM HEIRLOOMS

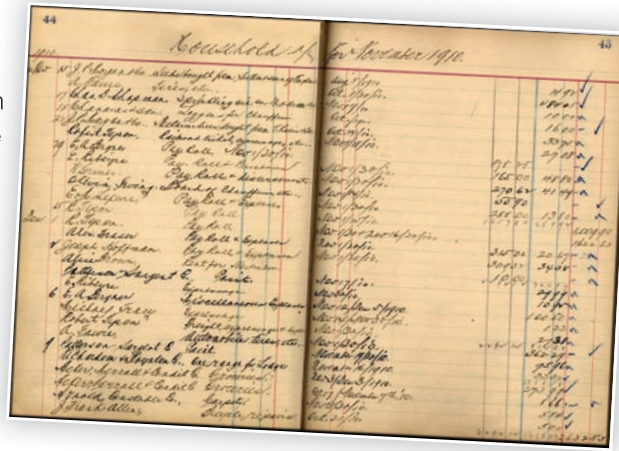
WENDY BURDEN (LEFT) AND FAMILY MEMBERS ON THE STEPS OF HENNESSY HALL (1964)





**HEIRLOOMS**

(continued from page 3)  
 as approved by Hamilton Twombly, increasing the initial contract price for the mansion of \$300,000 to \$378,191.14 (including, for example, “Granite Floor of West Porch ... \$690.00); a letter to Hamilton Twombly dated June 23, 1898, about the purchase of a French cooking range for the basement kitchen that Monsieur Donon would make so famous; and a file box with employee records. Here, for instance, are the entries for Frederick Berles, Florham’s distinguished-looking head butler who, for decades, opened the mansion’s front door. He was hired on November 17, 1910, at \$55 a month, in 1916 received a



LEDGER LISTING DAILY EXPENSES OF FLORHAM

\$10 a month increase; by 1922 his salary was \$150 a month. And here are the file pages for Samuel Kelly, a footman who began work on July 8, 1917, at \$65 a month, and N. Alocco, a laborer hired in April of 1914 at \$1.75 a day. Another ledger lists in detail all the daily expenses of Florham (for example, “\$273.99 for groceries

from November 3/ December 3, 1910”). The importance of these records to any student or historian studying the Gilded Age is incalculable.

The history of Florham is such an integral part of the University, the beauty of the estate’s buildings and the Olmsted-created landscape

such a wonderful part of the campus, that there may be a day in the future when one of the rooms of the mansion is dedicated to the history of Florham, and there could be displayed, to their best advantage, the wonderful gifts of Wendy Burden; of Mr. and Mrs. R. Layne Weggeland who last year gave the chairs that were purchased at the Parke-Bernet auction; and of other pieces which may continue to return home. And, perhaps, someday, a room in the mansion could even be restored and decorated just as it was in the Twomblys’ day, to be enjoyed by students and their parents, faculty, administrators and visitors interested in seeing how life was lived in New Jersey’s greatest Gilded Age mansion.

— Arthur T. Vanderbilt, II



LINDA CARRINGTON, SUZY MORAN AND LINDA MEISTER (FROM LEFT) UNPACKING THE BURDEN GIFTS

**‘FALL AT FLORHAM’ GALA, OCTOBER 15**

The Bucky Pizzarelli Trio headlines “Fall at Florham” on Saturday, October 15, at 7 in the evening. The Friends credit Audrey Parker for her creativity and connections. After moving the gala from spring to fall, we wanted to create a more exciting experience for our guests and supporters. Friends of Florham board member and long-time jazz enthusiast and fan Audrey made the arrangements for the

Bucky Pizzarelli Trio to perform for us. Audrey assures us their repertoire includes fabulous dance music, which promises us a truly wonderful evening.

Bucky Pizzarelli is known as “the complete jazz musician” and the master of the seven-string guitar. He is an international talent who has played with jazz greats like Benny Goodman, Bud Freeman, Stephane Grappelli and his son, John Pizzarelli. His

latest recording is 5 for Freddie: Bucky’s Tribute to Freddie Green on the Arbors label.

Please join us for the most amazing gala ever, a wonderful evening in a beautiful setting with master musicians. Contact Susan McConville, executive director of development, University advancement, at 201-692-7008 or mconvil@fdu.edu to check availability.



# MCKIM, MEAD & WHITE REVISITED

## *Triumvirate: McKim, Mead & White | Art, Architecture, Scandal, and Class in America's Gilded Age*

by Mosette Broderick, Alfred A. Knopf: New York, 2010

Enthusiastic, humorous and extremely knowledgeable, Mosette Broderick, a professor in the fine arts department and director of urban design and architecture studies at New York University, engaged a capacity crowd in Hartman Lounge on March 6 as she spoke about the architects McKim, Mead and White — their lives, their work and their influence on the urban landscape in the latter part of the 19th and early 20th centuries. With more than 1,000 completed public and private commissions — major representative works such as the Boston Public Library; the original Madison Square Garden; commissions for Columbia and New York Universities; the Pierpont Morgan Library; the Rhode Island State House; and stately residences such as “Rosecliff” in Newport, the Vanderbilt Mansion in Hyde Park and “Florham,” among many others — the firm’s preeminence during this period was indisputable.

Yet implicit in Broderick’s talk were questions, mysteries of a sort that she set out to explore both in her presentation, and more fully in her recent comprehensive study, *Triumvirate* — namely, how did these three men who came from modest although somewhat intellectual backgrounds, who did not appear to be destined for big things, who showed no outward signs of greatness and who occasionally failed at things, become the leading architects in the U.S. between 1879–1914? Moreover, how was

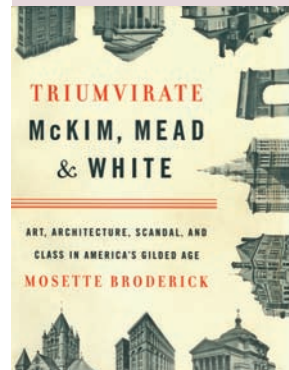
their firm able to capitalize so successfully on the transitional shifts in the U.S. economy — the growth of industry, the creation of new wealth, the associated rise in social ambitions — and maintain their preeminence for nearly 35 years?

With a slide presentation overview of the firm’s work supporting her talk, Broderick considered these issues. She gave brief portraits of the three principals, Charles Follen McKim, William Rutherford Mead and Stanford White; their disparate personalities: the often depressed McKim; the dour, practical Mead; and the flamboyant, increasingly troubled White. She detailed their sketchy educations (Mead was the only college graduate), and/or talents, such as White’s ability to draw well and later capabilities as an interior designer; their individual apprenticeships and the influence of their study and trips to Europe on the evolution of their designs. Broderick offered representative samples of various phases or developments in the firm’s work such as early large shingle-style country houses in Elberon, N.J., and Newport, R.I.; and the iconic Italian Renaissance-influenced Villard Houses in New York. Other samples included clubs such as the University Club, an eclectic blend of Italian Renaissance precedents; impressive civic architecture, public monuments such as the Washington Memorial Arch in Greenwich Village; and later work such as McKim’s less embellished, classically-inflected design built on a human scale for the original Pennsylvania Station. In 1963, Pennsylvania Station, amid some protests was demolished — a destruction which is generally thought to have given rise to the preservation movement in New York City.

What was clear in Broderick’s presentation, and addressed in greater detail in *Triumvirate*, is that despite their varied talents and the “flawed” personalities of the principals, “it was the synthesis of their association and their lifelong loyalty to one another that made this firm almost the brand name of architecture in turn-of-the-century America.” Beyond this immediate analysis — in which luck and impeccable timing may have also played an unstated role — Broderick suggested that it was the firm’s ability to respond to the *zeitgeist*, to cater, in a sense, to the new wealth and their inherent insecurities, modifying European influences for an American audience, and, more important, helping to create a sense of who we were as a nation that contributed to the success of the firm. These are large claims, which are addressed, for the most part successfully, in *Triumvirate*.

While there have been other, well-received studies of McKim, Mead and White, Broderick has added to the literature in *Triumvirate* by shifting the emphasis, focusing instead on the principals and the attendant players, providing significant original research and essentially writing a cultural history of the period. Detailed information about the three men, their families and their growth both individually and as architects within the firm — and outside — add to our understanding of this influential trio and the Gilded Age period. We also learn about Joseph Wells, a member of the firm, and by general consensus the best designer, who also “maneuvered a reluctant team trained in the school of Richardson [premier architect] into an admiration society for the Italian Renaissance.”

(continued on page 8)



MOSETTE BRODERICK

# OUR TRIP TO WROXTON ABBEY

A small group of the Friends of Florham, along with some of their friends, traveled to Fairleigh Dickinson's Wroxton Abbey, near Banbury, England, on May 21. Wroxton is the quintessential English village scene, a peaceful environment in the beautiful English countryside with thatched cottages, climbing flowers, narrow lanes and traditional gardens. Wroxton Abbey is a remarkably beautiful, modernized 17th-century manor house set in 56 acres with lakes, a cascade, Italian garden and stunning vistas.

After our official welcome by Amanda Mabbitt, head receptionist, we ventured into nearby Banbury for a brief walkabout and some minor shopping. Pres-

ent-day Banbury is full of shops, both retail and consignment, but there is little for the antiquarian! Back at the Abbey, we had tea in the Buttery, rested a bit and enjoyed dinner in the Carriage House dining room.

Some attended church on Sunday, and then Professor Paul Edwards led tours of the Abbey, the grounds and Wroxton village. The Friends especially enjoyed their visit to the home of Robert Denton, the estate gardener. Robert, like his father before him, has tended the grounds since he was a young man. For diversion, he carves uniquely magnificent walking sticks.

Later in the day, we planted a *Petula Pendula* (Silver Birch) tree in memory of Walter Savage. Walter was both a member of the board of Friends of Florham, professor emeritus and a former director of Wroxton College. He often said that his year at Wroxton was the best year of his life, and the students from the Wroxton Class of 1967 remained loyal to him until he passed in 2009.

On Monday, we enjoyed a walking tour of two Oxford colleges, Balliol and New College. Following the tour we shared a typical pub lunch at the Turf Tavern, which is among the oldest pubs in Oxford. Then we were off to tour Blenheim Palace with an amazing guide. Tuesday, following breakfast, we attended a lecture by Professor Pamela Ma-



GROUNDSKEEPER ROBERT DENTON PLANTING A SILVER BIRCH IN MEMORY OF WALTER SAVAGE

son on the "Merchant of Venice." Following the lecture, we traveled to Stratford-upon-Avon to visit the three properties associated with Shakespeare: Mary Arden's 1504 House, Anne Hathaway's Cottage and Shakespeare's House. Our day concluded with a production of "The Merchant of Venice" at the very new Royal Shakespeare Theatre. The production was, to say the least, very different. Had we not had Professor Mason's background information, we might have found it very difficult to understand. On Wednesday, we visited the Cotswolds, where our first stop was Chipping Camden. This little town with limestone houses, climbing roses and carefully tended gardens is representative of all Cotswold towns.

Thursday we were off to Chatsworth. Through her connections with the Cavendish family, Board member Suzy Moran was able to make arrangements for a special visit with Deborah, the Dowager Duchess of Devonshire, and tea with Amanda, the current Duchess of Devonshire. Needless to

THE FRIENDS POSE FOR A GROUP PHOTO ON THE STEPS OF WROXTON ABBEY



BLenheim PALACE





say, this visit was the highlight of the trip. Prior to our tea, we were invited to call on the Dowager Duchess, “Debo” the last of the famous Mitford Girls, at the Old Vicarage. She was quite lovely, and we all enjoyed the brief meeting.

After our visit, we climbed into our van and whizzed back to Chatsworth House, right on time for our appointment with the current duchess, who graciously invited us to share tea in



SUZY MORAN WITH AMANDA, THE DUCHESS OF DEVONSHIRE

the “Lower Library.” After tea, the duchess led us back to the entry hall, where she requested that our guide treat us to “a behind-the-scenes tour.” Chatsworth is the most amazing of the historical trust properties — the sheer scope of the estate, the grounds and buildings and the condition of the furnishing are breathtaking. It was a beautiful experience!

We ended the week on Friday at nearby Sulgrave, ancestral home of George Washington. Linda Meister, our president, is a Colonial Dame and arranged a private tour of the property with Jenny Overson, a very special guide. While Sulgrave was not the grandest property we toured, Miss Overson’s knowledge and presentation made the tour among the most interesting of our trip. In the afternoon

we toured Broughton Castle, another nearby property that is well preserved and unique for its time.

Altogether, it was a wondrous week, truly a special time and a unique opportunity to share great experiences and see beautiful properties with amazing furnishings beautifully restored and maintained. We came back even more motivated to work on the restorations and renovations at Florham.



SUZY MORAN (PINK SUIT), DEBORAH, DOWAGER DUCHESS OF DEVONSHIRE (POINTING) AND FRIENDS

## GREAT HALL PROJECT

The Friends completed another project this summer with the refurbishment of the sofas and chairs in the Great Hall. The two small sofas are to the left as you enter the main door, and the four upholstered chairs are on either side of the marble-topped table and the new breakfront. In addition, there are six armless chairs, four placed around the circular table and two flanking another small side table. The previous coverings showed wear from the almost constant use by students, visitors and staff and have needed updating for some time.

Friends President Linda Meister and decorator Suzy Moran selected coordinating fabrics and had the sofas and upholstered chairs recovered by Eamonn’s

Upholstery in Cedar Knolls, N.J., with a damask pattern red, green and gold fabric that is guaranteed to withstand thousands of “rubs.” Suzy also suggested the addition of nail-head trim to the sofas, which has enhanced their appearance considerably. Dawn Dupak and Susan Adams recovered the seats of the side chairs with a coordinating striped fabric also selected to withstand wear.

The newly refurbished furniture looks beautiful in the Great Hall, the fabrics have a lovely glow in the sunlight and pull together the colors in the window coverings, the walls and the gilded trim. The Friends, under the design eye of Suzy Moran, have effected another successful renovation.



DAWN DUPAK MEASURES FABRIC FOR THE SIDE CHAIRS



REFURBISHED SOFAS IN THE GREAT HALL



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THE LIBRARY  
285 MADISON AVENUE  
MADISON, NEW JERSEY 07940

**TRIUMVIRATE**

*(continued from page 5)*

And if we are still wondering how these three men essentially made it, Broderick suggests further that it was their ability to collaborate with others — artists and landscape designers such as August Saint-Gaudens, John Singer Sargent and Frederick Law Olmsted — that contributed to their success at the time. Membership in elite clubs also provided an entry for men to network, to give business to each other, and, the three men seemed to flourish in this environment. They were members of many clubs and also designed club buildings such as Boston's Algonquin Club or the relocated and redesigned Century Association in New York.

Our understanding of the scope and development of the firm's work is enhanced by the inclusion in *Triumvirate* of more than 100 black and white illustrations. Yet

Broderick does not address the entire work of the firm, realizing after beginning her research with this objective, that another book would be required, and more to the point, that there was not world enough and time. In the end, she opted for studying the "path of the architects." We might regret that Broderick didn't consider the firm's impressive work on the Fifth Avenue façade of the Metropolitan Museum of Art or even some recognition of the design for "Florham," but she is particularly persuasive about other concerns such as the story behind the building of the Boston Library and in her discussion of McKim's promotion and design of the American Academy in Rome and unrelenting determination to educate future generations and help them to understand the role and importance of architecture as America assumed greater world power.

— Carol Bere

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Join the Friends of Florham. Participate directly in our efforts to preserve the architectural history of Florham, and support our informative program series. Your support will make a difference.

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