

NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK NOMINATION

NPS Form 10-900

USDI/NPS NRHP Registration Form (Rev. 8-86)

OMB No. 1024-0018

MILTON HOUSE

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United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

1. NAME OF PROPERTY

Historic Name: MILTON HOUSE

Other Name/Site Number: Goodrich, Joseph, House and Cabin

2. LOCATION

Street & Number: 18 South Janesville Street

Not for publication: N/A

City/Town: Milton

Vicinity: N/A

State: WI

County: Rock

Code: WI105

Zip Code: 53563

3. CLASSIFICATION

Ownership of Property

Private: X

Public-Local: \_\_\_

Public-State: \_\_\_

Public-Federal: \_\_\_

Category of Property

Building(s): X

District: \_\_\_

Site: \_\_\_

Structure: \_\_\_

Object: \_\_\_

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing

2

\_\_\_

\_\_\_

\_\_\_

2

Noncontributing

\_\_\_ buildings

\_\_\_ sites

1 structures

\_\_\_ objects

1 Total

Number of Contributing Resources Previously Listed in the National Register: 2

Name of Related Multiple Property Listing: N/A

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**4. STATE/FEDERAL AGENCY CERTIFICATION**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this \_\_\_ nomination \_\_\_ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property \_\_\_ meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register Criteria.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Certifying Official

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal Agency and Bureau

In my opinion, the property \_\_\_ meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register criteria.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Commenting or Other Official

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal Agency and Bureau

**5. NATIONAL PARK SERVICE CERTIFICATION**

I hereby certify that this property is:

- Entered in the National Register
- Determined eligible for the National Register
- Determined not eligible for the National Register
- Removed from the National Register
- Other (explain): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Keeper

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Action

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**6. FUNCTION OR USE**

Historic: DOMESTIC  
DOMESTIC

Sub: hotel  
single dwelling

Current: RECREATION & CULTURE

Sub: museum

**7. DESCRIPTION**

ARCHITECTURAL CLASSIFICATION: VERNACULAR  
OTHER: Hexagon

**MATERIALS:**

Foundation: limestone

Walls: grout

Roof: asphalt

Other: N/A

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**Describe Present and Historic Physical Appearance.**

The Milton House property is located on the east side of South Janesville Street (STH 26) where Madison Street (STH 59) enters it. The property is comprised of two contributing buildings: the Milton House and the Goodrich Cabin; and one noncontributing structure: a small wall built to look like a well. There is a mix of residential and commercial buildings dating from the late nineteenth to the early twentieth century north and south of the property. To the west is the Public Square, an open green space donated to the village by Joseph Goodrich. There is an industrial park to the east of the Milton House. Both the Milton House and the Goodrich Cabin are well-maintained, with some minor alterations, and retain their character, scale, materials, massing and vernacular form.

The Milton House is a three-story hexagonal tower, with a two-story rectangular wing attached to the south face of the tower. Both sections are of grout construction and were built by Joseph Goodrich in 1844-45.<sup>1</sup> The Goodrich Cabin is a front-gabled log building, which was erected in nearby Lima Township in 1837 and moved to the Goodrich property in 1839.<sup>2</sup> The noncontributing wall that suggests a well was built in 1954.<sup>3</sup>

The hexagonal tower housed the Milton House hotel, and the Goodrich family lived in the wing. Each face of the tower measures approximately 20 feet. The wing measures 19 feet (north-south) by 42 feet (east-west). The first two stories of the tower and the wing were begun in 1844 and completed in 1845. Just prior to his death in 1867, Joseph Goodrich began construction on the third floor of the tower. It was finished in 1868. Originally, the wing measured about 92 feet north-south and was composed of five units. The units south of the Goodrich family's living quarters housed shops with living quarters above. There was a two-story brick section extending 40 feet to the east (rear) of the middle unit. Following the collapse of the third and fourth units (counting south from the tower) in 1948, the brick section was made a free-standing building. This building, just south of the Milton House, now houses the museum gift shop but is not included in the boundary because it is thought to post-date the Civil War, and thus has no association with the Underground Railroad. In the restoration of the Milton House, completed by the Milton Historical Society in 1954, only the unit closest to the tower was rehabilitated. As part of the 1954 rehabilitation, a small addition was erected connecting the north-facing facade of the wing and the southeast-facing facade of the tower. The addition measures nine feet (north-south) and 16 feet east-west along its north wall. This addition houses a staircase, providing a second exit, which was needed when the building became a museum.

The limestone basement walls are 18 inches thick. The above-ground walls are made of concrete, or grout, which Goodrich created by mixing sand, slake lime, broken stones and gravel, with water. On the first floor, the walls are 15 inches thick; on the second and third floors, they are 12 inches thick. The exterior walls have a smooth plaster finish, except for part of the east-facing (rear) facade of the wing, which is unfinished. The tower has a low-

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<sup>1</sup>*Janesville Gazette*, 24 January 1846.

<sup>2</sup>Interview with Judy Scheehle, Executive Director, Milton Historical Society, 11 December 1996.

<sup>3</sup>Interview with Scheele, 19 November 1997.

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pitched hip roof, and the wing has a shed roof. Both roofs are clad with asphalt shingles and enriched with exposed rafters. A small masonry chimney rises in the center of the tower roof. The Milton House retains its original wood, double-hung sash windows. The windows and doors all have plain wood surrounds. On the tower, all the first-story windows are six-over-six in configuration, while those at the second and third stories are four-over-four in configuration. The windows on the wing vary and will be described below with each facade.

The main facade of the Milton House faces west. Two sides of the tower are visible from the west: one faces northwest and the other faces southwest. On the northwest-facing facade, there is a small, multipaned window in the basement, one window at the first story, and two evenly-spaced windows at each of the second and third stories. On the southwest-facing facade, there is a small, multipaned window in the basement, a single door (east) and one window (west) at the first story, and two regularly-distributed windows at each of the second and third stories. On the west-facing facade of the wing, there is a small, multipaned window in the basement, and a centrally-placed single door, with one nine-over-six window on either side of it, at the first story. A single, exposed, wood beam forms a continuous lintel above the door and windows. There is an exposed wood beam on either side of the door as well. These beams abut the lintel, creating a concrete transom above the door. At the second story, there are two nine-over-six windows on this facade of the wing. A flight of two concrete steps leads up to each of the tower and wing doors.

The north-facing facade of the tower features a single door, slightly off-center, at the first story, with one window on either side, and two evenly-spaced windows at each of the second and third stories. A flight of three concrete steps leads up to the door. On the north-facing facade of the wing is the 1954 addition, which matches the rest of the building in materials and finish. There is a single door in the basement, one four-over-four window at the first story of the addition close to the tower, and one four-over-four window above it.

The south-facing facade of the tower is largely hidden by the wing, which is attached to this facade. At the third story, above the roof-line of the wing, two regularly-spaced windows are visible. There is one six-over-six window near the center of the south-facing facade of the wing at the second story.

Two sides of the tower are visible from the east: one faces northeast and the other faces southeast. The northeast-facing side of the tower has one window toward the center of the first story, and two regularly-distributed windows at each of the second and third stories. Most of the southeast-facing facade of the tower is covered by the wing and the addition. One window can be seen at each of the first and second stories, and the two windows at the third story are both visible above the roof of the wing and the addition. On the east-facing facade of each of the wing (south) and the addition (north), there is a single door. There is one four-over-four window north of the door in the wing. At the second story, there are three six-over-six windows in the wing, and one four-over-four window in the addition.

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On the interior of the tower, the rooms are laid out around a central hexagonal wood stair, which wraps around the chimney. There is a lobby and dining room on the first floor, and six guest rooms opening off a central hall on each of the second and third floors. The basement was divided into three rooms originally, all of which were used for cold storage;<sup>4</sup> an additional wall was installed in 1954 to provide two public restrooms and a furnace room. The basement is entered through the addition. Previously, access was through a trap door in the dining room (blocked in 1954), and there is also a bricked-up doorway in the northwest-facing wall of the basement that was believed to be an entrance to another tunnel. In the wing, there are two rooms on the first floor, one east and one west. The second floor of the wing has been one open room since the 1954 remodeling. Originally, a central corridor ran north-south through the wing, with one room on either side of the corridor in each of the five units. Throughout the building, door and window surrounds are very plain. The addition is a stairhall, with a single, wood straight staircase. The walls and ceilings are plastered throughout the building, except in the basement. There are exposed wood beams in the lobby and dining room. The flooring is made up of wood boards; the flooring in the dining room was installed in 1954. The first floor joists were reinforced with beams, visible in the basement, in 1954 as well. In the basement, concrete was poured on top of the original dirt floor in 1954. Some of the walls and ceilings are unfinished, others are plastered.

There is a tunnel that runs approximately 40 feet from the southeast corner of the tower to the middle of the Goodrich Cabin. This is thought to have been built about 1845, when the Milton House was completed, although it may have been excavated somewhat later. The tunnel is currently about six feet high, two feet wide, and lined with stone and concrete. Previously, it was earthen, and ranged from three to five feet in height along its length.<sup>5</sup>

The Goodrich Cabin stands about 40 feet east (to the rear) of the Milton House. The cabin was erected in Lima Township by an unknown builder in 1837. Joseph Goodrich moved it to his property in 1839 and attached it to another timber building he had built in 1838, in order to have more room for his inn. The 1838 building was one-and-one-half stories, front-gabled, of hewn oak, with wood clapboard exterior walls and wood shakes on the roof. This building, which measured 16 feet (north-south) by 18 feet, was contiguous with the existing cabin. That is, the south wall of the 1838 building butted-up against the north wall of the existing cabin, while the west walls of both building formed a continuous line. There were no openings on the north- or west-facing sides of the 1838 building, but there was a single door on the east-facing gable end, with one nine-over-six window south of the door, and a smaller, six-over-six window above the door. A third building was added on to the cabin complex, either in 1839 or shortly thereafter. It was erected between the 1838 and 1839 cabins, with an entrance in the 30-foot-long, north-facing wall. It was side-gabled, with a clapboard exterior finish, wood shakes on the roof, a slightly-off-center single door, and one six-over-nine window west of the door. This building was the original Milton House hotel and was connected to the hexagon when the grout Milton House was erected by means of a short, one-story, flat-roofed, clapboarded passage. The passage opened into the doorway that now goes into the addition. When the grout Milton House was completed in 1844-45, the circa 1839 hotel building became

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<sup>4</sup>A description of the layout of the Milton House appears in the *Janesville Gazette*, 24 January 1846.

<sup>5</sup>Alice Davis Tripp, editor, "Goodrich-Davis Genealogy and History: 1638 through 1963," 1963, 2:139, Milton Historical Society, Milton, Wisconsin.

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the kitchen for the new Milton House. The frame buildings were still standing as late as 1910.<sup>6</sup> The Goodrich cabin is the only building remaining from that earlier group of buildings. The loss of the other two 1838-39 buildings has a minimal impact on the integrity of the Milton House, as evidence indicates that they were intended to be temporary and were built to house the functions of the new Milton House while it was under construction. The buildings were located behind the Milton House, were not visible from Janesville Street, and apparently did not connect to the tunnel.

The existing cabin is a small, one-1/2-story, front-gabled building constructed of hand-hewn logs. It measures 14 feet (north-south) by 18 feet. The roof is clad with wood shakes. There is a single wood door in the east-facing (front) facade of the cabin, and one multipaned window in the gable end above it. Sometime after about 1910, there was a shed-roofed entry, or lean-to, constructed to protect the door. It was removed sometime after 1937,<sup>7</sup> most likely during the 1954 remodeling of the Milton House. There is one four-over-four wood double-hung sash window in each of the north- and south-facing facades. The north-facing window was previously a door.<sup>8</sup> There is a large, rock-faced random rubble chimney on the west-facing facade of the cabin. The interior of the cabin is one room, with unfinished walls, wide boards on the floor and ceiling, and exposed ceiling beams. The room is dominated by the wood rails that protect the door into the tunnel beneath the cabin. Originally, a small trapdoor, with a steep, ladder-like wood staircase, gave access to the tunnel. The opening was enlarged, a concrete stair built, and the rails and door installed in 1954 to give museum visitors easy access to the tunnel. The cabin was regROUTED in 1985.<sup>9</sup>

Six feet southwest of the southwest corner of the Goodrich Cabin, there is a random rubble wall built to look like a well. It is three feet in diameter, about two feet tall, and was constructed in 1954. There never was a well on this spot; there was a communal well in the middle of what is now Storrs Lake Road, north of the Milton House and Goodrich Cabin.<sup>10</sup>

The Milton House and the Goodrich Cabin retain excellent integrity. Alterations to the two buildings date from the 1954 remodeling and include the addition to the wing and the rear of the Milton House, enlarging the tunnel and lining it with masonry, enlarging the opening in the cabin floor into the tunnel, and constructing concrete steps in the cabin end of the tunnel. These alterations are inconspicuous and do not compromise the integrity of the Milton House and the Goodrich Cabin.

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<sup>6</sup>These earlier buildings appear on a circa 1910 postcard, on file, Milton Historical Society.

<sup>7</sup>The lean-to does not appear on the circa 1910 postcard; but does appear in the drawings that are a part of HABS WIS-118.

<sup>8</sup>Early twentieth century postcard, on file, Milton Historical Society.

<sup>9</sup>Scheehle.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid.





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**State Significance of Property, and Justify Criteria, Criteria Considerations, and Areas and Periods of Significance Noted Above.****SUMMARY**

The Milton House illustrates the westward spread of abolition and its transformation from a moral to a political issue. The founder of the town of Milton and proprietor of the Milton House, Joseph Goodrich, was a Seventh-Day Baptist, one of many to leave the “Burned-over District” in western New York to settle in Wisconsin, taking the reform movement and its ideals westward. In Wisconsin the issue of abolitionism became strongly politicized, the “free soil” doctrine becoming a key tenet of the Republican party when it was founded in the state in 1854. Joseph Goodrich and his activities at the Milton House, where he lived from 1839 until 1867 and sheltered fugitives, illustrate this particular brand of abolitionism that developed in the Middle West in the 1840s.

The Milton House is eligible under National Historic Landmarks Criterion 1 for its association with the abolitionist reform movement as represented by Joseph Goodrich, and as a link in the informally-organized network known as the Underground Railroad. The period of significance extends from 1839, the year in which Goodrich erected the log cabin on the property, until 1865, when the Thirteenth Amendment was ratified, marking the end of the abolition movement.

**HISTORICAL BACKGROUND****Introduction**

Joseph Goodrich was born in Hancock, Massachusetts in 1801, and went to live with an uncle in Stephentown, New York around 1812. He relocated again in 1819, settling in Alfred, in western New York's “Burned-over District,” so named because the area had been scorched by the flames of religious revivalism.<sup>11</sup> Like Goodrich, many of the residents of the Burned-over District were Baptist migrants from New England, who brought with them an evangelical spirit and missionary zeal. By 1825, there were some 40,000 Baptists in New York--a larger group by far in both numbers and proportion than any other state--who tirelessly advocated the causes of anti-slavery and temperance, their influence eventually spreading beyond the borders of New York state and reaching the Midwest.<sup>12</sup>

While proponents of abolition had existed throughout the history of the Nation, primarily in the Northeast, during the 1830s, reformers in the Burned-over District began to call for the immediate emancipation of slaves. Historian Whitney Cross explains: “the Burned-over District seized leadership in the abolition crusade, and the consequent influence of the region upon the enlarged anti-slavery agitation in the forties and fifties and upon the Civil War itself

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<sup>11</sup>*Commemorative and Biographical Record of the Counties of Rock, Green, Grant, Iowa and Lafayette, Wisconsin*, (Chicago: J. H. Beers and Company, 1901), p. 48.

<sup>12</sup>Cross, Whitney, *The Burned-Over District: The Social and Intellectual History of Enthusiastic Religion in Western New York, 1800-1850* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1950) pp. 24-25, 55-56.

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constitutes the most important single contribution of Western New York's enthusiastic mood to the main currents of national history."<sup>13</sup>

The leading proponent of the immediate emancipation of slaves was William Lloyd Garrison, who formed the New England Anti-Slavery Society in 1832. Garrison eschewed politics and refused to ally himself with any political party. Evangelical groups in the Burned-over District, including the Seventh Day Baptists, initially viewed immediate emancipation as necessary preparation for the millennium; but they eventually moved toward championing the cause for its own sake on moral grounds, advocating the use of any political means necessary to bring about emancipation.<sup>14</sup>

While Garrison, through his national organization, took the position that participation in politics should be avoided at all costs, followers in the state chapters had divergent opinions. James G. Birney, leader of the New York Anti-Slavery Society, eventually broke with Garrison's dictum, splitting from the society along with a group of the more radical members. They formed the Liberty Party in 1840, running Birney for President that year and again in 1844. Nationally, votes for Birney totaled only about seven thousand in 1840, but that number rose to sixty thousand by 1844.<sup>15</sup>

By the 1840s, westward migration from the Burned-over District had spread the doctrine of immediate emancipation to the Midwest and the newly-settled territories west of the Mississippi. The question of whether or not slavery would be permitted in the new territories brought the issue of abolition to the forefront of the political stage. By 1848, the Free Soil Party, the successor of the Liberty Party, garnered 300,000 votes standing on the principle that slavery should be prohibited in the area newly acquired from Mexico. The question of whether Kansas would be admitted to the Union as a free or slave state brought a sense of urgency to the question of abolitionism to Midwestern farmers. The attempt by Southern interests to admit Kansas as a slave state is widely regarded as the catalyst for the formation of the Republican Party in Ripon, Wisconsin in 1854.<sup>16</sup>

By the time the Republican party was founded, Wisconsinites had already earned a national reputation for their commitment to the abolition movement. According to Underground Railroad scholar Wilbur Siebert, ". . . Wisconsin was the foremost State in the West in the anti-slavery movement."<sup>17</sup> This was true in great part because the Wisconsin Territory, and later the state, was largely populated initially by migrants from the Burned-over District who brought with them their fervent opposition to slavery. Goodrich founded Milton on the moral principles that were widely championed in western New York, but that took on great political importance as they moved West. As Goodrich's home, place of business, and a "station" on

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<sup>13</sup>Cross, p. 217.

<sup>14</sup>Cross, pp. 224-225.

<sup>15</sup>Tyler, Alice Felt, *Freedom's Ferment* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1944) p.499

<sup>16</sup>Tyler, pp.544-545.

<sup>17</sup>Wilbur H. Siebert, "The Underground Railroad in Wisconsin," Unpublished materials, circa 1900, State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Madison, Wisconsin, p. XX.

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the Underground Railroad, the Milton House illustrates the particular strain of abolition that developed in the Midwest.

### The Politics of Abolition in Wisconsin

Emigrants from New England and western New York were overwhelmingly represented among Wisconsin's earliest residents. By 1850, one-fourth of Wisconsin's population (68,600 persons) had been born in New York alone, earning Wisconsin the nickname, "New York's daughter state."<sup>18</sup> As the Yankees moved westward, they brought their commitment to social reform with them. While still a territory, Wisconsin's first abolitionist society was established (1840), and her first anti-slavery newspaper began publication (1842). A local chapter of the national abolitionist Liberty party was established in Wisconsin Territory in 1840. It had a small but devoted following in southeastern Wisconsin, including Sherman Booth, who made his newspaper, *Wisconsin Freeman*, the mouthpiece of the Liberty party.

When the Free Soil party was formed in New York state in 1848 by those who opposed permitting slavery in the new American territory of New Mexico, a chapter was immediately formed in the new state of Wisconsin. Despite the fact that the Free Soil party did not embrace equality and suffrage for African-Americans, as the Liberty party had, Booth urged Liberty party members to join the Free Soilers. While Martin Van Buren, the Free-Soilers' presidential candidate in 1848, did poorly nationally, he received 26 percent of the vote in Wisconsin. In addition, Free Soiler Charles Durkee, formerly of the Liberty party, won the congressional seat in southeast Wisconsin that year.<sup>19</sup>

In September 1850, the U. S. Congress adopted the Fugitive Slave Law, which denied fugitive slaves trial by jury, and commanded all citizens to help capture fugitives, or be fined and imprisoned. Both Wisconsin Senators and all the state's Representatives voted against it. Governor Nelson Dewey, in his message to the legislature in January 1851, stated: "The fugitive slave act, so called, certainly contains provisions odious to our people, contrary to our sympathies and repugnant to our feelings."<sup>20</sup>

In 1854, two events focused national attention on Wisconsin and its anti-slavery politics. The first was the case of Joshua Glover and Sherman Booth; the second was the founding of the Republican party in Ripon, Wisconsin.

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<sup>18</sup>Robert C. Nesbit, *Wisconsin: A History*, (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1973), pp. 101, 152.

<sup>19</sup>Nesbit, pp. 235-36.

<sup>20</sup>Vroman Mason, "The Fugitive Slave Law in Wisconsin with Reference to Nullification Sentiment," State Historical Society of Wisconsin *Proceedings*, 1895:119-121.

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In March 1854, Joshua Glover, a fugitive slave who had been living in Racine since 1852, was captured by slave-catchers and jailed in Milwaukee. A mob, incited in part by *Wisconsin Freeman* editor Sherman Booth, freed Glover, spirited him to Racine and put him on a boat for Canada. Booth was arrested for "aiding and abetting" Glover's escape, in violation of the Fugitive Slave Act. Before U. S. Commissioner Winfield Smith, Booth's lawyer, Byron Paine, argued that the Fugitive Slave Law was unconstitutional. Unmoved, Commissioner Smith ordered that Booth be tried before a federal court.<sup>21</sup> Before the case came to trial, Paine and Booth applied to the Wisconsin Supreme Court for a writ of *habeas corpus*, and requested that the Fugitive Slave Law be declared unconstitutional. The Wisconsin Supreme Court agreed and declared Booth a free man.<sup>22</sup>

The Wisconsin Supreme Court's decision was widely publicized and well-received not only in Wisconsin, but throughout the North. The New York *Tribune*, for example, praised "Glorious Wisconsin" in an editorial. Despite this, Booth was again arrested and held for trial. In January 1855, a jury found Booth guilty of breaking the Fugitive Slave Law, and Booth was fined and sentenced to one month in prison. Booth again appealed to the Wisconsin Supreme Court, which declared that the Fugitive Slave Law was unconstitutional and that the state could free anyone illegally imprisoned. Booth was released again.<sup>23</sup>

The case went to the United States Supreme Court in December 1858. The court reversed the Wisconsin Supreme Court decision and ordered it to turn Booth in to federal officers. Wisconsin refused, but a U. S. Marshall arrested Booth again in March 1860. An angry crowd released him from the Milwaukee jail in August 1860. Booth went into hiding but was captured in October 1860. He remained in jail until pardoned by out-going President James Buchanan in March 1861.<sup>24</sup>

The Free Soil party, lacking patronage, was languishing despite the controversy raging over the Booth case. New arrivals to Wisconsin wanted a party that was anti-slavery, but that excluded other issues championed by Free Soilers, such as prohibition and nativism, both highly unpopular with the many German immigrants who had settled in the state since 1850. To meet this need, a group of men led by Alvan Bovay founded the Republican party in Ripon, Wisconsin (at the Little White Schoolhouse, NHL-1974) in 1854. The Republican party was an instant success, taking the governorship and one U. S. Senate seat in 1855. In 1857, the Republican gubernatorial candidate was again elected. In 1860, the first Republican president, Abraham Lincoln, was elected.<sup>25</sup>

While loudly protesting slavery through politics, Wisconsinites more quietly supported the Underground Railroad. The Underground Railroad is thought to have been active in

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<sup>21</sup>James I. Clark, *Wisconsin Defies the Fugitive Slave Law*, Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1955), pp. 7 and 9.

<sup>22</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 10.

<sup>23</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 10 and 12.

<sup>24</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 17-19.

<sup>25</sup>Nesbit, pp. 238-39.

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southeastern Wisconsin by 1840. Some Wisconsin residents supported the Underground Railroad by giving money to assist fugitives, while others served as conductors. In southeastern Wisconsin, some Presbyterian, Congregational and Seventh Day Baptist Churches are believed to have been involved in the Underground Railroad. Racine played an important role, as a destination prior to the passage of the Fugitive Slave Act in 1850, and as a point of embarkation to Canada via an abolitionist-captained boat thereafter. Mr. A. P. Dutton, a known conductor in Racine, wrote that "...more than 100 [fugitive slaves] went from Racine..."<sup>26</sup> The route the fugitives may have taken to get to Racine is uncertain. According to Dutton, most of those who came to Racine were from Missouri.<sup>27</sup> As happened in other parts of the country, the fugitives may have followed rivers to reach the north. Any who followed the Mississippi to Rock Island, Illinois, could then have followed the Rock River to Newville, Wisconsin (just northwest of Milton). According to Wilbur Siebert, the Rock River was a route fugitives traveled through Illinois.<sup>28</sup> Several Seventh Day Baptist communities in Illinois and Iowa were said to have conductors on the Underground Railroad, including West Branch, Iowa; Welton, Iowa; Farina, Illinois; and Farmington, Illinois. From Milton, fugitives could have taken the territorial road east to Elkhorn, and then to Racine.

Milton's Seventh-day Baptist Church was formally organized in 1840 by Joseph Goodrich, although its membership had been meeting in the Goodrich home since their arrival in Milton from New York in 1839. Like other devout Seventh-Day Baptists in Wisconsin and throughout the Midwest, Goodrich assumed a position of leadership among abolitionists in Milton.

#### Joseph Goodrich and the Milton House

Goodrich settled in Alfred New York in the Burned-over District in 1819, having relocated originally from Massachusetts<sup>29</sup>. An ardent Seventh Day Baptist, the presence of a Seventh Day Baptist Church in Alfred, established there in 1816, may have drawn him to the area.<sup>30</sup> In 1821, Goodrich married Nancy Maxson (1796-1857) in Petersburg, Rensselaer County, New York. She was a member of a prominent Seventh Day Baptist family. In 1824, Joseph built a house in Alfred. There the Goodriches operated a temperance inn, kept a store, and

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<sup>26</sup>A. P. Dutton to Wilbur H. Siebert, 7 April 1896, p. 3, reproduced in Siebert, "The Underground Railroad in Wisconsin."

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., p. 2.

<sup>28</sup>Wilbur H. Siebert, *The Underground Railroad: Slavery to Freedom*, (New York: MacMillan Company, 1898), fold-out map insert.

<sup>29</sup>*Commemorative and Biographical Record of the Counties of Rock, Green, Grant, Iowa and Lafayette, Wisconsin*, (Chicago: J. H. Beers and Company, 1901), p. 48.

<sup>30</sup>Don A. Sanford, *A Choosing People: The History of the Seventh Day Baptists*, (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1992), p. 142.

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held religious services and town meetings. Their children Ezra (1826-1916) and Jane (1828-1903) were both born in Alfred.<sup>31</sup>

In 1838, Joseph Goodrich decided to head west again and talked his neighbor and fellow Seventh Day Baptist, Henry B. Crandall, into going along. The pair hired James Pierce to travel with them. The three walked from Milwaukee, coming eventually to Rock County. Goodrich filed a claim for the area that would become Milton. The military road running north from Chicago toward Madison (now Highway 26) ran through Goodrich's property. Goodrich is said to have drawn a line on the territorial map from Janesville to Fort Atkinson (now Highway 59), and seeing that it crossed the existing military road on his claim, built a frame cabin (demolished) near their crossing. When the second road was built the following year, it did indeed cross the other near his cabin. Goodrich opened a small store in the upstairs of the cabin and, leaving Mr. Pierce in charge, returned to New York.<sup>32</sup>

In addition to his wife and two children, Goodrich brought eight other friends and relatives back with him to Wisconsin. They arrived at the new cabin on March 4, 1839. Shortly thereafter, Goodrich brought another cabin (extant) to the site from Lima Township and attached it to the one he had built previously and built on another frame structure. This complex was the first Milton House hotel. In 1839, Goodrich also founded the village of Milton, surveying and laying out the town with James Pierce. Goodrich set aside a large "Public Square," and land for a church, a public school, and a cemetery. He also served as the first postmaster of Milton. The first school in the community was taught in his home beginning on March 9, 1839. The Goodriches held religious meetings in their home from March 18, 1839 until 1844 (when the services were moved to the Du Lac Academy building). The Milton Seventh Day Baptist Church was formally organized, with 50 members, in November 1840.<sup>33</sup> A separate church building was erected in 1852, on two lots donated by Goodrich.<sup>34</sup>

In 1844, Goodrich founded the Du Lac (later Milton) Academy and erected a grout building (demolished) to house the school. This was "the first gravel building erected in Milton."<sup>35</sup> Goodrich donated the land for the school and maintained the Academy at his own expense until 1854. In 1867, it was renamed Milton College. In 1844, Goodrich also built a blacksmith shop (extant, south of the Milton House on a separate parcel) and began constructing the Milton House, a hotel and commercial/apartment block, of the same grout construction that he used in the Academy. The Milton House was completed in 1845, and was

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<sup>31</sup>*Commemorative and Biographical Record of the Counties of Rock, Green, Grant, Iowa and Lafayette, Wisconsin*, p. 49.

<sup>32</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>33</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>34</sup>*History of Rock County, Wisconsin: Its Early Settlement, Growth, Development, Resources, War Record and Biographical Sketches*, (Chicago: Western Historical Company, 1879), p. 687.

<sup>35</sup>*History of Rock County, Wisconsin: Its Early Settlement, Growth, Development, Resources, War Record and Biographical Sketches*, p. 682.

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described in the *Janesville Gazette* as "...truly an object of curiosity."<sup>36</sup> Orson Squire Fowler, who promoted building octagon-shaped homes, visited Goodrich's hexagonal Milton House in 1850 and thereafter recommended grout be used in the construction of octagons.<sup>37</sup>

Goodrich formed political alliances early on, while pursuing an ultimately successful lobbying effort to bring the Milwaukee and Mississippi Railroad (later the Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul Railroad) through Milton and gave the line land for right-of-way and for a depot.<sup>38</sup> Built in 1847, it was the first railroad in the state. In this effort, Goodrich worked closely with Edward Holton, a prominent Milwaukee abolitionist who owned property in Milton. Holton (1815-1892) helped organize Wisconsin's Liberty party (1840) and the Republican party (1854); ran for Governor on the Free Soil ticket in 1853; and helped finance the Kansas Emigrant Aid Society in its effort to make Kansas a "free soil" state.<sup>39</sup> Goodrich entered the political arena himself in 1855, representing Rock County in the Wisconsin Assembly.<sup>40</sup>

Although his career as an elected official was limited to this one term, Goodrich worked through the Milton Seventh-Day Baptist church to promote political participation in the cause of abolitionism. In 1854, the Milton Seventh Day Baptist Church adopted the following resolution:

That the action of the present administration of the government of the United States, in the passage of acts promoting and extending the system of slavery, is unworthy of the support of liberty-loving voters, and that any person supporting this Administration, or any one not pledged against Slavery, by his vote, commits an act which out to exclude him from membership in [the Seventh Day Baptist Church] . . .<sup>41</sup>

The Seventh Day Baptist Church in America was founded during the Second Great Awakening at Providence, Rhode Island in 1791. Many of its early members were former Quakers. National Seventh Day Baptist Church leaders voiced their opposition to slavery on numerous occasions. As early as 1836, the Seventh Day Baptist General Conference adopted a resolution condemning slavery and exhorting church members to "remember those in bonds as

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<sup>36</sup>*Janesville Gazette*, 24 January 1846.

<sup>37</sup>Orson Squire Fowler, *A Home For All; or, The Gravel Wall and Octagon Mode of Building*, (New York: Fowler and Wells, 1854), cited in Richard Perrin, *The Architecture of Wisconsin*, (Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1967), p. 35.

<sup>38</sup>*Commemorative and Biographical Record of the Counties of Rock, Green, Grant, Iowa and Lafayette, Wisconsin*, p. 49.

<sup>39</sup>*Dictionary of Wisconsin Biography*, (Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1960), p. 175.

<sup>40</sup>*Journal of the Assembly of Wisconsin, Annual Session A. D. 1855*, (Madison: Beriah Brown, Printer, 1855), p. 3.

<sup>41</sup>Resolutions of the Northwestern Association, Seventh Day Baptist Historical Society, Milton, Wisconsin.

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bound with them."<sup>42</sup> In 1852, the Conference expanded on their earlier resolution, with the following, more radical expression:

Resolved, That we enter our solemn protest against the system of American slavery, as a sin against God, and a libel upon our national declaration, that "all men are created equal." That we regard the Fugitive Slave Law as an atrocious violation of the rights of humanity...; and that to aid in its execution would be treason to Jesus Christ.<sup>43</sup>

During the 1840s and 1850s, the national Seventh Day Baptist weekly newspaper, *The Sabbath Recorder*, carried descriptions of the meetings of the American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, reported on the participation of Seventh Day Baptists in anti-slavery conventions, and reported on national events pertaining to the issue of slavery, always applauding the efforts of abolitionists.<sup>44</sup>

As the influence of the church spread westward and new Seventh Day Baptist communities were founded in the Midwest, the call for political action became stronger. The March 21, 1850 issue of *The Sabbath Recorder* published an anti-slavery petition, drawn up by the American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, and urged church members to look for the petition, sign it, canvass for signatures and forward the petition to the United States Congress.<sup>45</sup> Of the Seventh Day Baptists, the author of the American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society's Thirteenth Annual Report stated: "This religious body is true to the Anti-slavery cause."<sup>46</sup> In 1852, *The Sabbath Recorder* published the platform of the Free Soil party, stating: "Presuming that all of our readers. . .will be anxious to see the "Platform," we copy it entire."<sup>47</sup> Beginning in 1854, *The Sabbath Recorder* frequently carried stories about emigration to Kansas, in some cases exhorting Seventh Day Baptists to settle there. In doing so the political makeup of the territory would presumably be tipped in favor of the Free Soilers.<sup>48</sup>

While Goodrich publicly advocated political participation for the abolitionist cause through his leadership in Milton's Seventh Day Baptist Church, he also acted discretely in supporting radical abolitionists and sheltering fugitive slaves at the Milton House. This quiet support of recognized radical abolitionists is illustrated by his employment of Jonathon Allen and Ambrose Coats Spicer at his Milton Academy.

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<sup>42</sup>Reverend James Bailey, *History of the Seventh-Day Baptist General Conference*, (Toledo, Ohio: S. Bailey and Company, 1866), p. 290.

<sup>43</sup>*The Thirteenth Annual Report of the American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, Presented at New York, May 11, 1853*, pp. 97-98.

<sup>44</sup>See, for example, "Free Negroes in Illinois," *The Sabbath Recorder*, 24 March 1853.

<sup>45</sup>"Anti-Slavery Petitions," *The Sabbath Recorder*, 21 March 1850, p. 1.

<sup>46</sup>*The Thirteenth Annual Report of the American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, Presented at New York, May 11, 1853*, p. 97.

<sup>47</sup>"Free Soil National Convention," *The Sabbath Recorder*, 19 August 1852, p. 1.

<sup>48</sup>See, for example, "Kansas as a Place of Settlement," *The Sabbath Recorder*, 11 December 1856.



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Jonathon Allen (1823-1892) was a student at Alfred Academy (now Alfred University, in Alfred, New York) when his parents, Abram and Dorcas Allen, moved to Milton in 1842.<sup>49</sup> In 1847, Allen enrolled at Oberlin College, in Ohio, at that time known as a radical, anti-slavery school and a stop on the Underground Railroad. One of his classmates was Ambrose Coats Spicer. In September 1848, Allen and Spicer, along with several other Oberlin students, led 16 fugitive slaves into Tappan Hall, armed themselves and guarded the fugitives until the slaveowners left. The Oberlin students then escorted the fugitives to a boat headed for Canada.

In November 1848, Allen came to Milton, serving as the teacher at the Academy for one term and returning to Oberlin in June 1849.<sup>50</sup> In the fall of 1851, Ambrose Coats Spicer (1820-1903) was hired to teach at the Academy. Spicer was in charge of the Academy until leaving for Kansas in 1858. He later served as a member of the guard at the inauguration of President Abraham Lincoln and was a friend of Sherman Booth and Owen Lovejoy.<sup>51</sup> Caroline Goodrich's diary indicates that the Goodrich family maintained close relations with the Allens and the Spicers, detailing frequent visits with Allen's parents and with Spicer and his wife. Both Abram Allen and Ambrose Coats Spicer held vigil with the Goodrich family at the deathbed of William Henry Goodrich, Joseph Goodrich's nephew, in September 1851.<sup>52</sup>

Several oral accounts relate that Joseph Goodrich and his family were conductors on the Underground Railroad and used the Milton House and Goodrich Cabin to hide fugitives. Hiding fugitive slaves would have been necessary, because, despite the fact that there were many abolitionists in the vicinity of Milton, the Milton House was a public hotel and tavern, and the Goodriches could not safely trust their customers. The earliest direct reference to Joseph Goodrich's involvement in the Underground Railroad appears in *The United States Biographical Dictionary and Portrait Gallery of Eminent and Self-Made Men: Wisconsin Volume*, published in 1877, which states simply: "His home was a refuge for the fugitive slave."<sup>53</sup> This was enlarged by Ezra Goodrich in his sketch of his father Joseph, which read:

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<sup>49</sup>Abigail Allen, *The Life and Sermons of Jonathon Allen, President of Alfred University*, (Oakland, California: Pacific Press Publishing Company, 1894), p. 33.

<sup>50</sup>Allen, pp. 48-53.

<sup>51</sup>W. A. Spicer to Rachel Salisbury, 30 June 1935.

<sup>52</sup>Caroline Goodrich Greenman Diary.

<sup>53</sup>*The United States Biographical Dictionary and Portrait Gallery of Eminent and Self-Made Men: Wisconsin Volume*, (Chicago, Cincinnati and New York: American Biographical Publishing Company, 1877), p. 496.

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"His home was a safe refuge on the Underground Railroad, for the fugitive [sic] fleeing from human slavery."<sup>54</sup>

Ezra Goodrich provides the most concrete evidence that the Goodrich family aided fugitive slaves. In 1865, Ezra Goodrich sponsored Andrew Pratt, an African-American who then lived in Milton, as a member of the Milton Lodge of Good Templars. This apparently did not sit well with some of the other members of the Lodge, who, through various machinations, organized the membership to induce Pratt to resign. Ezra, who was expelled from the Lodge as a result of this incident, published a letter in which he exposed the conspirators, expressed his support for Andrew Pratt and stated:

I have the approval of my own conscience in all that I have done for Andrew Pratt, nor do I regret at all having been expelled from the Lodge of Good Templars for daring to defend a colored man, who, bursting the chains that bound him to slavery, and fleeing to the broad prairies of Illinois, was there imprisoned under the infamous Black Laws of the State for no other crime save his color. But through the assistance of a noble-hearted Uncle of mine, WM. A. GOODRICH, he was brought to the quiet and liberty loving little village of Milton...<sup>55</sup>

Around 1890, Ezra showed his niece, Mabel Van De Mark, the tunnel and told her that it had been used to help slaves escape from the southern plantations north to Canada.<sup>56</sup> Although it is uncertain when the tunnel was originally excavated, and for what purpose, its circa 1890 dimensions (three to five feet high along its length) make it plausible that a person could have crawled through, or hidden in, the tunnel. It is equally plausible that the tunnel was constructed soon after the cabin was erected on the site to shelter the Goodrich family and the guests of the Milton House Hotel from Indian or bandit attack, a concern apparently voiced by Goodrich.<sup>57</sup> In 1982, Van De Mark wrote that her uncle, Will Davis, had told her about driving a hay rack to the Elkhorn Tavern, where he was told to go, have a good meal, and come back. Davis told Van De Mark that he knew there were people in the wagon on the way there, but that they were gone when he drove back.<sup>58</sup>

It is known that Goodrich hosted Sojourner Truth at the Milton House, probably in 1861 or 1862, when she came to speak at Milton Academy. On March 7, 1868, the *Coldwater Republican* (Coldwater, Michigan) reported that Truth had "visited Milton, where she was a

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<sup>54</sup>"Our Pioneers: Ezra Goodrich Sketches One of Them," undated newspaper clipping, Milton Historical Society, Milton, Wisconsin.

<sup>55</sup>Ezra Goodrich, "The Negro Imbroglia in the Milton Lodge of Good Templars," undated, Milton Historical Society, Milton, Wisconsin.

<sup>56</sup>Tripp, 2:139, Milton Historical Society, Milton, Wisconsin.

<sup>57</sup>Jandl, H. Ward, *Yesterday's Houses of Tomorrow: Innovative American Homes 1850 to 1950* (Washington, D.C.: The National Trust for Historic Preservation, 1991) p.46.

<sup>58</sup>Mabel Van De Mark to Mr. and Mrs. Leland Skaggs, 29 May 1982, Milton Historical Society, Milton, Wisconsin.

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guest of a Mr. Goodrich." The article relates a much-repeated conversation the two reputedly had regarding smoking, which Goodrich opposed. Truth smoked a pipe. Goodrich told her that smoking made her breath bad, which would prevent her entering Heaven. She is said to have replied that she would not need her breath in heaven.<sup>59</sup>

The Goodrich family's vocal anti-slavery stance strongly suggests that, had they been called upon to aid fugitive slaves, they would have done so instantly. The location of the Milton House on the Territorial Road and near the Rock River, either of which could have been a route for fugitives, and the testimony of A. P. Dutton, known Racine Underground Railroad Conductor, that most of the fugitive slaves passing through Racine came from Missouri, make it reasonable to assume that at least a few fugitives passed through Milton. There are oral accounts of Seventh Day Baptist Church members at Albion, Milton, Rock River and Walworth aiding fugitive slaves. There are many oral accounts of Underground Railroad activity at the Milton House, both from the Goodrich family, and from others. While the tunnel has been enlarged since the nineteenth century, it was large enough at that time that a person could have crawled through it. It is plausible that the tunnel could have been used in aiding fugitive slaves.

The Milton House has become the best known property associated with the Underground Railroad in Wisconsin--the leading state in the west in the antislavery movement from 1840 until the Civil War. Wisconsin gained a national reputation for abolitionist sentiment, largely as a result of radical political activity and jurisprudence. The life and activities of Goodrich exemplify how Wisconsin's earliest settlers brought with them the values that laid the groundwork for that activity. While united in a common cause, abolitionists had many different motives for seeking an end to slavery and widely divergent theories about how best to achieve that end. Goodrich and the Milton House represent an important regional expression of the national abolition movement.

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<sup>59</sup> Cole, Harry Ellsworth. *Stagecoaches and Tavern Tales of the Old North West* (Cleveland: Arthur Clark Co., 1930) p. 126.

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Previous documentation on file (NPS):

Preliminary Determination of Individual Listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.

Previously Listed in the National Register.

**MILTON HOUSE**

- Previously Determined Eligible by the National Register.
- Designated a National Historic Landmark.
- Recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey: # WIS-118 and WIS-119 (1937)
- Recorded by Historic American Engineering Record: #

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## Primary Location of Additional Data:

- State Historic Preservation Office  
 Other State Agency  
 Federal Agency  
 Local Government  
 University  
 Other (Specify Repository): Milton Historical Society Museum

**10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

Acreage of Property: less than one acre

UTM References: Zone      Easting      Northing  
                             16        341620    4737610

## Verbal Boundary Description:

The Milton House and Goodrich Cabin are located in the Village of Milton, Rock County, Wisconsin on part of Out Lot 360 of the Assessor's Plat of Milton, more particularly described as follows: Beginning at an iron pipe monument at the Northwest corner of Out Lot 361 of said Assessor's Plat, which corner is 1,287.25 feet Northerly from the South line of Section 27, Township 4 North, Range 13 East, as measured on the East line of Park Street, running thence Northerly along the East line of said street 40.0 feet to the place of beginning; thence Northerly along the East line of said street 59.1 Feet to an angle in said street line; thence N 2 degrees 40 minutes E 20.6 feet to an iron pipe monument at the Southwesterly corner of a 50 foot street to Storrs Lake; thence S 87 degrees 20 minutes E along the South line of said Street, 137.45 feet to an iron pipe monument on the East line of said Out Lot; thence S 1 degree 9 minutes W along the East line of said Out Lot No. 360 and continuing to the North line of Out Lot 362, 100.05 Feet; thence Westerly along the North line of Out Lots 362 and 361, 144.2 feet (more or less) to the place of beginning.

## Boundary Justification:

The boundaries of the Milton House property follow the north and west lines of the legal parcel the resources sit on. The east boundary follows the east lot line about half way, and then becomes a line of convenience drawn to exclude land that does was not historically associated with the Milton House. The south boundary line is a line of convenience drawn to exclude resources that do not retain integrity from the historic period and are not associated with the Underground Railroad.

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Date: December 1, 1997

NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS SURVEY  
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