



The "JET" (#25) Queen Cutlery's First Switchblade

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This article contains some history of the first switchblade Queen Cutlery made after WWII. The #25 Jet "Opens like a jet plane takes off." The knife was made for several years before the U.S. patent was issued and went through several redesign modifications in its short production life, as described below. (see: Figure 1. E. Clarence Erickson patent approval drawing from 1950). We also cover some customized versions of the Jet.

There have been several very useful articles on the Jet knife, most notably by Ulf Ahlstrom in Knife World (January, 2010) and a more detailed article of his available on YouTube: "Fit for a Queen – the No. 25 Jet by Queen Cutlery", Dec 31, 2015, as well as by Ted Benedict on YouTube, and Charles Casaday on Facebook – see references). These articles herald an increasing interest in traditional switchblades and the eventual return of "automatic folding knives," such as Queen Cutlery's very successful "Express" series after 2015 (See our six articles on Express knives in references.)

The pattern was taken from the #19 "Outdoor knife" and #20 "Toothpick," that had been popular sellers for hunting and fishing over the company's pre-war years, As Queen City Cutlery. In the 1950s, it was modified to the #25 "Jet", and in 1953, the #46 "Fish Knife" (with the addition of a second blade scaler and hook disgorging). The Jet was a large, though slim, pattern at 5" (closed) with a single, narrow clip blade just under 4".

The handle was made of a thermoplastic plastic material, not well described in the catalogs, in a black jugged finish. Several collectors have commented that NO other handle materials were used in Queen's production of this knife. Any celluloid or other handles are re-scaled by private individuals as custom knives, as shown in the later section of this article.

Though there are no sales records available for the knife, but it was marketed well with the allusion to a modern jet taking off, at the same time as these aircraft were making their debut in the ongoing Korean war and the knife apparently sold well. Some think the knife, with its long, curved handle was "sexiest American switchblade ever made" (Ted Benedict, You tube, 2013.)

Nov. 14, 1950

E. C. ERICKSON
POCKET KNIFE
Filed July 27, 1948

2,530,236

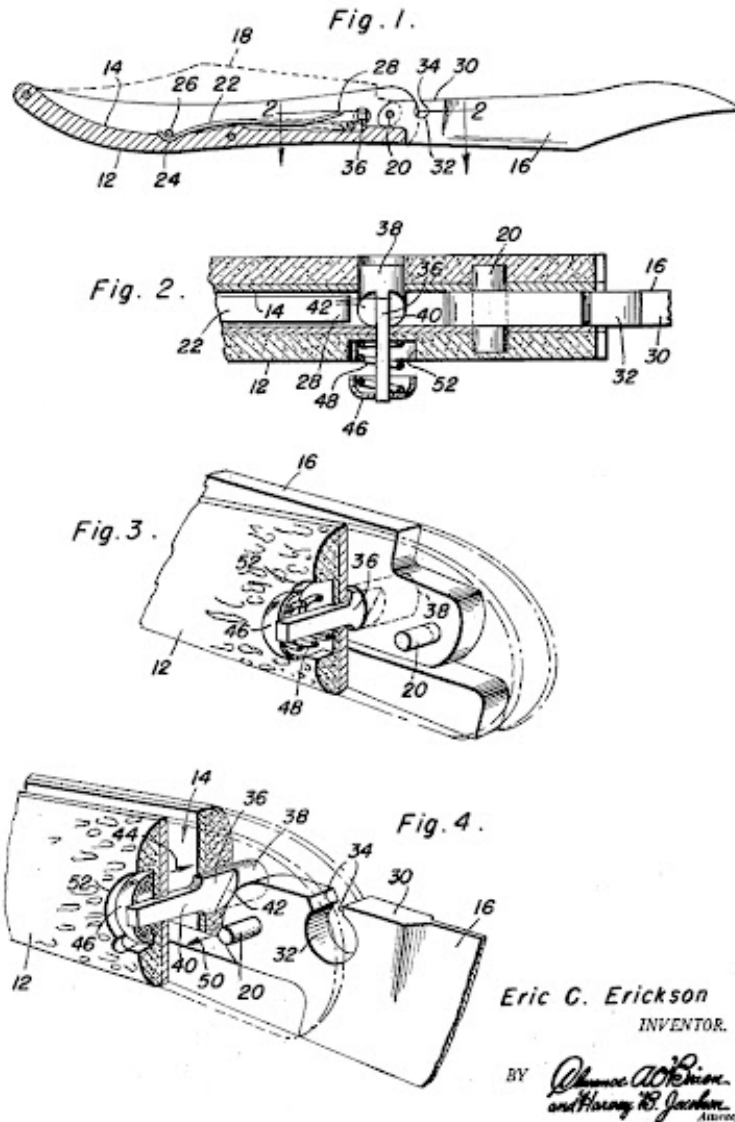


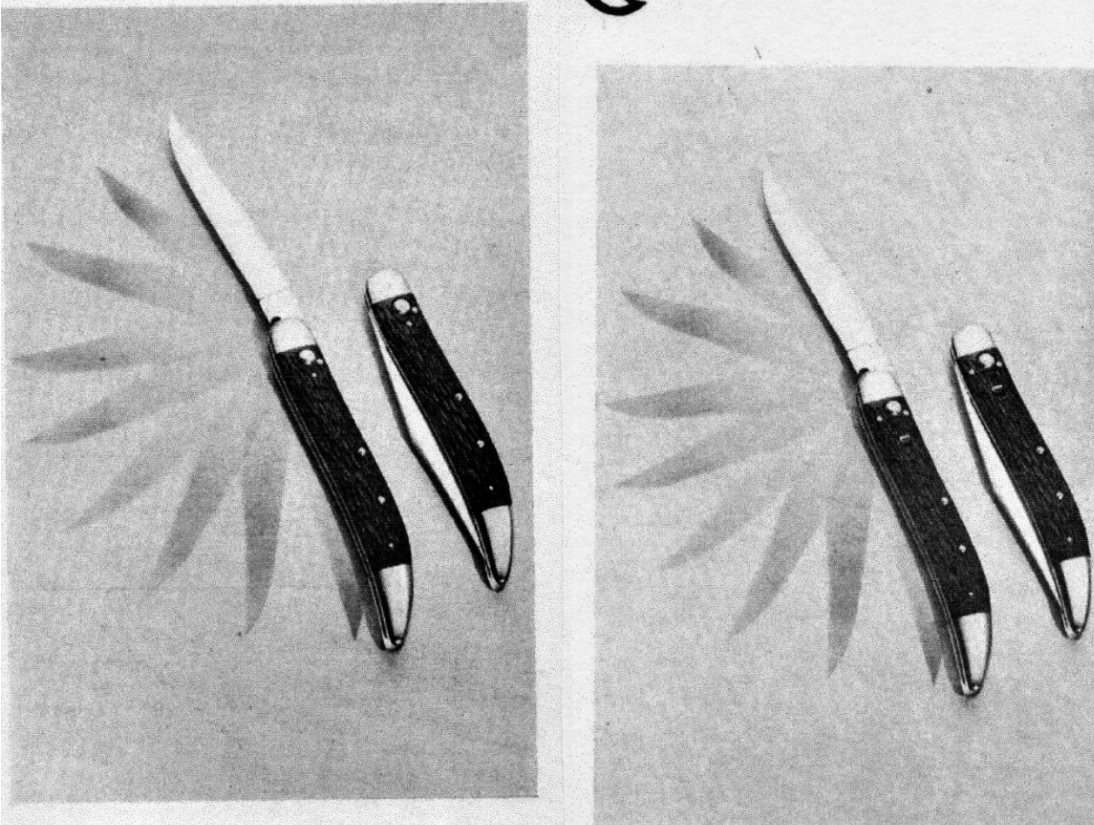


Figure 1. E. Clarence Erickson, Queen Cutlery's President. Application for the Jet switchblade patent, filed in 7/27/1948 and granted in 11/14/1950. (Internet photo), including the revision showing the safety.

SYMBOL OF  QUALITY ...

 QUALITY ...



No. 25 Jet Push Button Pattern — Our own exclusive patented knife. Something brand new! Opens like a jet plane takes off. Double bolster, nickel silver finish with brass linings. Sturdily constructed. One heavy duty large clip blade 3-15/16 inches long. 5-inches long when closed.

No. 25 Jet Push Button Pattern with Safety Lock — Our own exclusive patented knife. Something brand new! Opens like a jet plane takes off. Double bolster, nickel silver finish with brass linings. Sturdily constructed. One heavy duty large clip blade 3-15/16 inches long. 5 inches long when closed.

Dealers cost price \$24.00 per dozen

Figure 2. #25 Jet Switchblade in two versions, (left), 1947 catalog (p.28) without safety lock and 1952 catalog (p. 27), with added safety lock (right). Though Queen re-used catalog photos many times, one can notice in this case the small safety lock just under the push button for opening. (Since "dealer" price usually translated to 50% of retail, these knives sold for approximately \$4.00 for the retail buyer in 1952.) (© Dan Lago).

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
1								
2								
3	Model # 25, Jet Push Button/Barlow Razor Blade, Queen Catalog Project, 1947 - 2017							
4								
5								
6	Model #	Pattern Name	Handle	# Blades	Blade	Closed	Source	Page
7	25	Jet Push Button	Bone stag	1	3.92"	5" C	Cat#82	28
8	25	Jet Push Button with safety lock	Bone stag	1	3.92"	5" C	PL1-3-1949	1
9	25	Jet Push Button with safety lock	Bone stag	1	3.92"	5" C	Cat#85	26
10	25	Jet Push Button with safety lock	Bone stag	1	3.92"	5" C	PL10-1-1951	1
11	25	Jet Push Button with safety lock	Bone stag	1	3.92"	5" C	Cat#88	26
12	25	Jet Push Button with safety lock	Bone stag	1	3.92"	5" C	Cat#89	26
13	25	Jet Push Button	Bone stag	1	3.92"	5" C	Cat#91	22
14	25	Barlow Razor Blade	Bone stag	1	3.92"	5" C	Cat#92	20
15	25	Barlow Razor Blade	Bone stag	1	3.92"	5" C	PL 10-1-58	1
16	25	Barlow Razor Blade	Bone stag	1	3.92"	5" C	Cat#93	19
17	25	Barlow Razor Blade	Bone stag	1	3.92"	5" C	Cat#94	19
18	25	Barlow Razor Blade	Bone stag	1	3.92"	5" C	PL 10-16-1961	1
19	25	Barlow Razor Blade	Bone stag	1	3.92"	5" C	Cat#95	19
20	25	Barlow Razor Blade	Bone stag	1	3.92"	5" C	PL 8-3-1964	1
21	25	Barlow Razor Blade	Bone stag	1	3.92"	5" C	Cat#96	23
22	25	Barlow Razor Blade	Bone stag	1	3.92"	5" C	Cat#97	29
23	25	Barlow Razor Blade	Bone stag	1	3.92"	5" C	PL 2-14-1969	1
24	25	Barlow Razor Blade	Bone stag	1	3.92"	5" C	PL 11-2-1970	1
25	25	Barlow Razor Blade	Bone stag	1	3.92"	5" C	Cat #50	4
26	25	Barlow Razor Blade	Queen Stag	1	3.92"	5" C	PL 9-10-1973	1
27	25	Barlow Razor Blade	Queen Stag	1	3.92"	5" C	PL 6-1-1974	1
28	25	Barlow Razor Blade	Queen Stag	1	3.92"	5" C	PL 9-15-1975	1
29	25	Barlow Razor Blade	Queen Stag	1	3.92"	5" C	PL 9-15-1975	1
30	25	Barlow Razor Blade	Queen Stag	1	3.92"	5" C	PL 9-15-1975	1
31	25	Barlow Razor Blade	Queen Stag	1	3.92"	5" C	PL 5-15-1976	1
32	25	Bench Barlow	Delrin Bone				PL 3-7-1977	1
33	25	Bench Barlow	Delrin Bone				PL 12-18-1978	1
34	25	Bench Barlow	Delrin Bone	2		3.5 c	PL 3-1-80	1
35	25	Bench Barlow	Delrin Bone	2		3.5 c	Catalog 1981	4

Figure 3. Queen Cutlery Guide Catalog summary for #25, showing the non-safety Jet was replaced after 2 years, 1946-1948 (and 1954) with the Jet "push button with safety lock," 1949-1953 for a total run of 8 years. Return to the non-safety lock in 1954 suggests that the decision to retire the knife was made early and we can speculate earlier inventory was used for the last year. The Barlow razor knife quickly replaced the Jet in 1955. (Note: This guide shows an error in use of "bone stag" handle material, used in most other Queen knives of that period.) (© Dan Lago).



Figure 4. Jet Switchblade 1946-1948 (and 1954) without safety lock. (© Fred Fisher).



Figure 5. Jet Switchblade 1949-1953. With safety lock just below the silver opening button. (© Fred Fisher).

A review of Tang Stamps

Figure 4, shows a nice example of the earliest mark side tang stamp for the Jet.



Figure 6. Three mark side tang stamps, the bottom two show the earliest version, "the big Q" (though apparently two different sizes of the stamp were used), and a two-line block lettering of "QUEENCUTLERYCO TITUSVILLE.PA". (You can see that enlarged in Figure 8.)



Figure 7. Pile side tang stamps on the same three knives in figure 6, all with "PAT PENDING." We also use images in Figures 6 and 7, to permit direct comparison of center pin differences. The middle knife is clearly a hammered/flat pin as compared to the top and bottom knives where "spinning marks" can easily be seen. The top bolster pin also shows a bit indented. – Thus, the middle knife is a "parts knife" in our opinion (see page 12).



Figure 8. Mark side tang stamp. This is an unusual tang stamp, not yet shown in our tang and etch guide, but it has been found on a number of Jet knives which certainly look factory-made. It has not been found on any other Queen knives.



Figure 9. Patent number 2530236, Pile side Tang stamp on both knives with safety and no safety, on later Queen Jet knives.
(© Charles Casaday, 2020).

Issues for Jet Collectors. Although not emphasized by some articles to date, it seems clear that the mechanical troubles faced by the Jet were important to Queen's management in the decision to stop producing the Jet. The original patent was modified to provide the safety lock even before the original patent was finally approved. Figure 1., of revised patent approval shows (in images "3" and "4") the safety lock mechanism.

Apparently, the brass liners were used to hold the blade open and were not as durable as they might have been, causing the tip of the long blade to "peek" above the lower bolster over time and to cause some knives NOT to continue to "open as a jet" (Benedict, 2013). Queen quietly complained that a significant part of this problem was that users DID NOT understand the need to depress the opening (and closing) button, which led to overpowering the mechanism at every closing – therefore, greatly shortening its life.

A third plan to modify the knife's lock was produced, and those drawings have been found (see Figure 10), but that knife was never produced nor offered for sale and none like it have been found. That knife design included a change that made the knife a lockblade, which would have been a very useful improvement in our opinion.

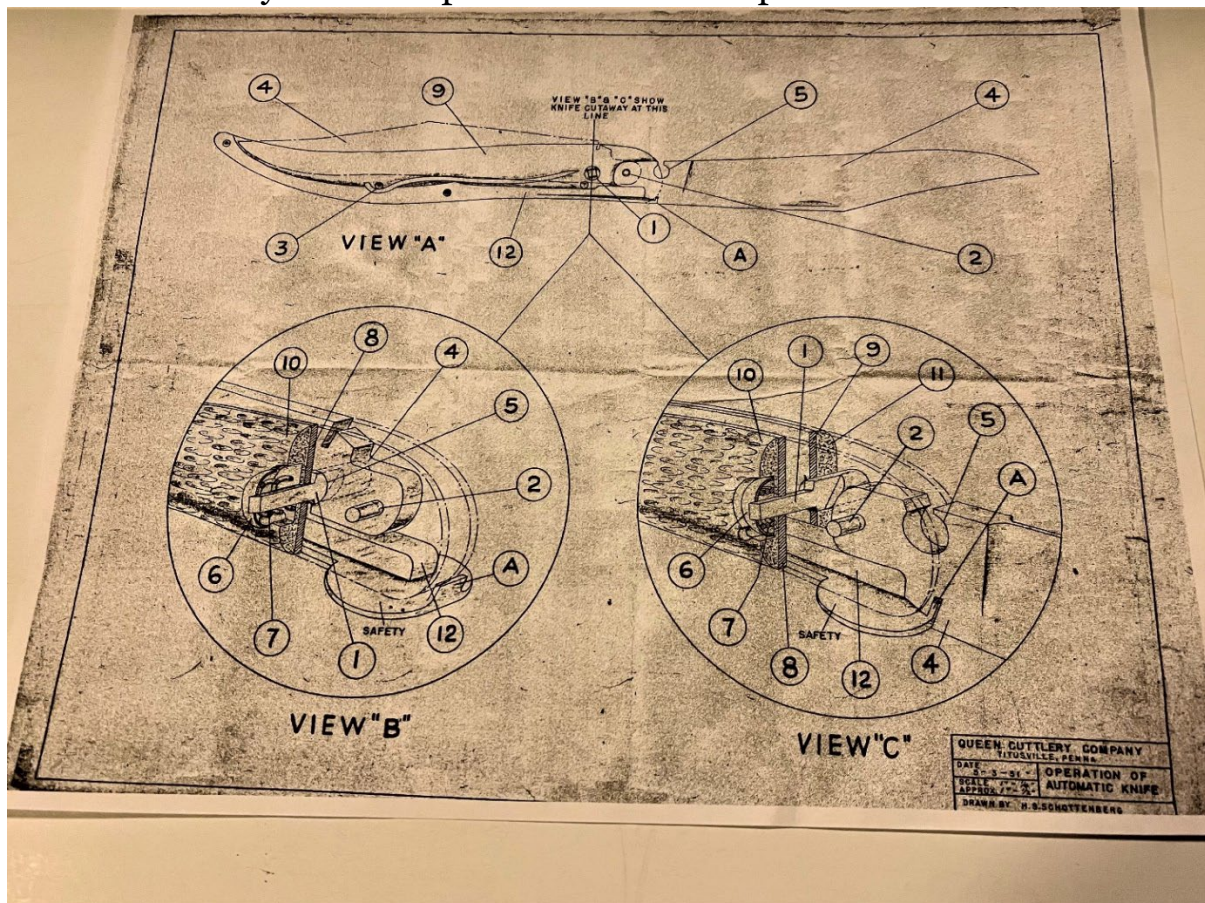


Figure 10. Schematic of the proposed, but never produced, version of the #25 Jet with a Lockblade design (closed in "B" and open in "C"). (© Fred Fisher). This schematic was found by Ken Daniels after Queen was sold to Daniels Family Cutlery in 2012. We are just speculating, but the nearly 70 year-old idea might have lit a fire in his thinking to move forward with the very successful Express series of knives.

The decision was made to retire the #25 Jet over 3 years before the 1958 Federal switchblade law was passed. In Pennsylvania, where the Jet (and recently the Queen Express Switchblade) were produced, you are not likely to be arrested JUST on Pennsylvania Consolidated Statutes, Section 18, penal section 907, "possessing instruments of crime", ([Title 18 - PA General Assembly \(state.pa.us\)](#)), but if you are, you better get a good lawyer! (Note, for a current introduction to state knife laws you are interested in, refer to check [American Knife and Tool Institute \(akti.org\)](#)). It is not likely that any Jet collector should fear law enforcement coming for his or her collection.

Because of the special machining on the base of the Jet blades, and the prohibition on switchblades emerging in the future for both Pennsylvania and the nation, the Queen executives decided to trash the existing inventory of blades when the knife was retired. The story is both blades and locking parts were dumped in concrete driveways and sidewalks around Titusville in the mid-1950s. We have been told, as is sadly often the case with Queen cutlery, that some large barrels of Jet knife parts were also sold to some makers in southern states, according to Master Cutler Fred Sampson (2017). So, collectors still need to be aware of parts knives, even from these early years.

Fred Sampson also specified that the critical differences are that:

- A.) A parts knife almost certainly will have a flat or hammered center pin, while the original factory knife will always have a spun center pin;
- B.) The top pin which holds the blade in place is also likely to be larger and almost "domed" to help handle pressures in the knife;
- C.) Backspring parts often showed rust which had to be ground off, reducing the thickness of the spring. Unless the blade was also reduced, this would likely produce gaps between the backspring and liners on the back of the knife.
- D.) Of course, any handle other than the black thermoplastic material is a heads-up (Fred Sampson, personal communication, 2017).



Figure 11. Example of a third modification to make #25 Jet into a lockblade – note the deep notch at the back of the very bottom of the blade, as shown in Figure 10. This blade is a part that was sold from the factory now in a private collection. You can faintly see the "big Q" tang stamp, while the pile side shows the patent number, as in Figure 9. (© Bob Cahill).



Figure 12. Queen Jet parts for new knives. These parts are destined for customized knives, shown in our final section, but some makers might attempt to sell these as original factory knives, aiming for the historical knife collectors' market, at high prices. Note the rust mentioned above on some of the backsprings and the cautions listed on page 12 (c.), above. (© Bob Cahill).

Custom handles on Jet switchblades

Because the #25 Jet was only produced in a black synthetic over almost 70 years ago, some surviving Jet knives have been re-handled to create some very striking knives. Figures 12, 13, and 14, show a few examples of customized Jet knives.

Of course, we are confident that many other custom versions of the Jet have and will be made in the future. Some of these are very attractive knives and depending on whether a collector is interested in historical accuracy or beauty, we can see why such customized knives will have a bright future.



Figure 12. Customized Jet with no safety lock and candystripe celluloid handles. (Internet photo)



Figure 13. Seven customized Queen #25 Jet knives (all with no safety lock) with very beautiful high-end handle materials created with great skill. (© Bob Cahill).

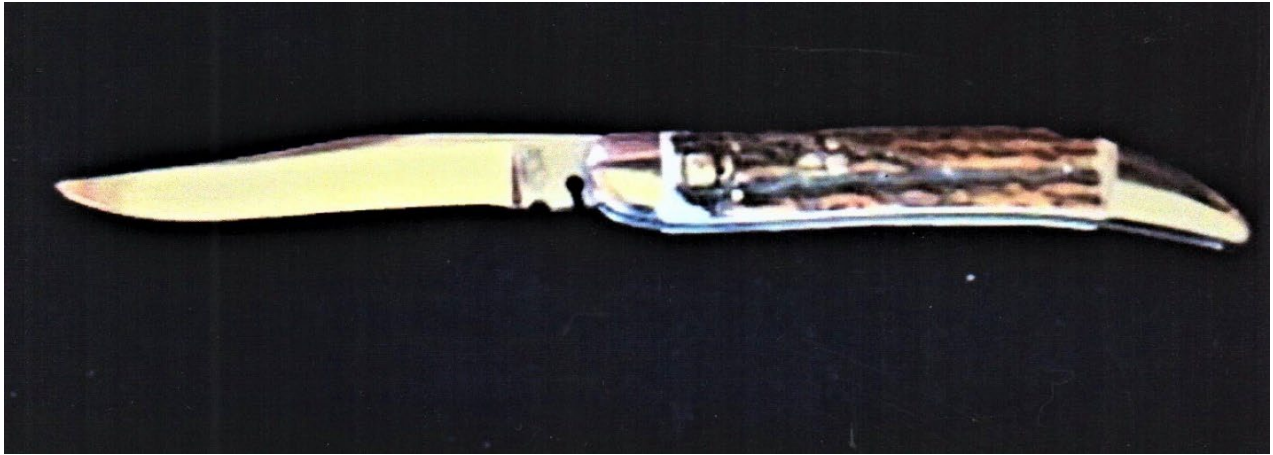


Figure 14. Customized Jet with no safety lock and torched Sambar stag handles (Internet photo).

Figure 14 is included just to demonstrate that any handle material available in large sizes can be used to make a modern Jet knife – though we have not yet seen the current poster child of mammoth Ivory, that one may someday appear. Seeing these "modernized" Jets, one is inclined to accept Ted Benedict's conclusion about how "sexy" these Jets have become. Of course, there is a place for tactical gear, but these knives seem "Very Uptown" in our opinion.

This article is first edition from our group and if you have suggestions for improvement or additional things you would like to see added, please do not hesitate to contact us. Thank you.

References

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[John Henry Express Switchblades, w tuna valley 2-16 22 second edition](#)

[Mountain Man Express Drop Point Blade Knives by Queen, 2-16-2022, first edition](#)

[Queen Express knives database 2-16-22 \(an Excel file\)](#)

[Special 3EXP Damascus and Mammoth by Queen Cutlery 2-16-22, first edition](#)

[Wharncliff Blade Mountain Man Express by Queen Cutlery 2-16-2022](#)

Pennsylvania Consolidated Statutes, Section 18, penal section 907,
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