

# BROADSIDE

Fall & Winter 1987

## Dutch Neck School

*Carey C. White wrote the following article as the winning entry in a contest held at the Dutch Neck School in 1984.*

Can you imagine being sent to the cloakroom if you were talking instead of studying? Or perhaps march into your classroom after recess to a record? If you were in the fifth grade in 1929, this was true. Can you imagine getting under your desk and covering your head during an air raid drill? If you were in the fifth grade in 1957, this was true. In a fascinating way, Dutch Neck has a very long and interesting history.

Our present school began as a four room school in 1917. When construction of the brick school was first starting, three graves were found. The graves were located on land that had been used as an old Negro burial ground. They were identified as members of the Pompey Updike family. As the years passed and population increased, more rooms were added. Two rooms were added in 1927. Another six rooms plus a gym were added in 1951. When ten additional rooms were being added in 1956, construction stopped for several days because skeletons from an old Indian burial ground were discovered and had to be moved.

Dutch Neck has always been a prosperous and agricultural area, where tomatoes and potatoes are grown. The school has been surrounded by farms. Opposite the school, where the Windsor Chapel is now located, was a dairy and turkey farm. The farm was owned by the parents of Malcolm Roszel, an ex-mayor of West Windsor. To the east of the school was Mr. Tindall's farm. Beyond that was Mr. Grover's farm and behind that was Mr. Holman's farm.

In 1929, there was a small playground in the back. However, the boys and girls played on separate sides of the playground. In 1953, there was a baseball field where there is now a parking lot. Later in the 1970s Stuart Reed donated 7 acres which enlarged the playground.

From the very beginning, grades K-8 were taught at the Dutch Neck School. It became a middle school, grades 4-6, in 1962, when Maurice Hawk was built. The teaching and administrative system has changed over the years. When the school had only four to six rooms one teacher taught two grades. While the teacher was teaching one grade, the other grade was studying. It was



very quiet. If you weren't studying or were caught talking, you were sent to the cloakroom.

At this time there weren't certified principals as we know them today. There was a "Head Teacher" who was in charge of the school but also had to teach. The first principal with a certificate was John Archibald. Those who followed him were: Don Daily, James Sandilos, Frank Walton (1953-59), Sheldon Moore (1950-65), Frank Bradshaw (1965-?1974), Alamedia Pace (1974-79), Arthur Downs (1979-86) and the present principal, Katherine Gross (1986-present 1988).

There were always certain teachers who were the strength or nucleus of the system. Some of these teachers were: Mrs. Kizzy Hockenberry, a first grade teacher; Mrs. Ethel Little, a fourth grade teacher; and Mrs. Josephine Stepenowski, a third grade teacher. In the 1950's, some teachers would be there for only one or two years while their husbands attended the Theological Seminary in Princeton.

The average class size throughout the years has been 15-20 children. However, during the '50s and '60s 50-70 migrant farm children would enter the system for six weeks. Migrant labor would come during the summer and fall to pick tomatoes and potatoes. Therefore during September and October there would be 15 children in a class one day and 30 the next.

Today in 1984, the principal of Dutch Neck School has a more comfortable office and different responsibilities from earlier principals. In 1956, the principal's office was in the basement of the school. It had huge uncovered steam pipes running through it. Later it was located by the entrance, then in Room 10. Early principals were



responsible for ordering supplies and planning bus routes. At this time there wasn't a Transportation Department as we know today. The principal was also more involved in the community. For example Frank Walton was the principal when two Dutch Neck students were killed in a fire at home. There wasn't any money to pay a funeral home to bury them. Mr. Walton took the responsibility of raising the money to bury them.

Even our lunch room has a history. Up until the '50s, children ate with their teachers in the classroom. You had to either bring your lunch or go home for lunch or you didn't eat. In 1953, children still ate with the teachers but in the basement. Hot lunches were first served by Mrs. Mather, who volunteered to start a cafeteria.

Now that we have learned the past we can look forward to the future. As the community grows what will this future be?

To answer Carey's question: Since 1984, the increase in West Windsor's population has made it necessary to build a Middle School to house 7th and 8th Graders. An additional school is being built for 5th and 6th Grades. Maurice Hawk is adding additional rooms for K-3rd Grades.

The excellence of West Windsor's school system brings more and more students to the community, filling present schools to capacity and beyond. The Township is committed to continuing the excellence of its schools. Where it will end is up to the residents of West Windsor and the Administrators of its schools.

—Carey C. White

## House Tour

Our 1987 Holiday House Tour will take place from 1 to 5 p.m., on Sunday, December 13, at Tamarack Hall ("The Castle") on Bear Brook Road in Princeton Junction. The tour will include all three floors of the house, fully decorated for Christmas.

Even those who have toured in past years will find many additions to the collections of musical instruments, dolls, antique toys, paperweights, scales, military hats and antique cooking equipment.

In addition to the house tour, about a dozen crafters have rented space to enable you to do some of your holiday shopping during the house tour. Of course, the Historical Society will be selling notecards, maps and prints, as well as holiday decorations.

Exhibits of West Windsor photographs and memorabilia as well as vintage clothing, donated to the Society, will be on view during the tour.

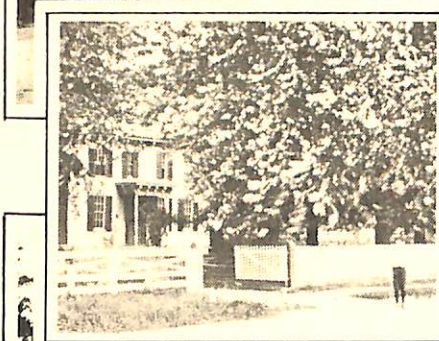
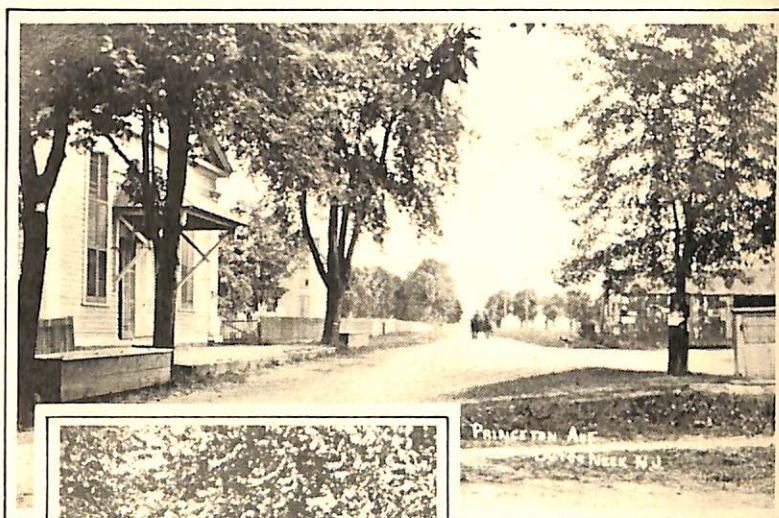
Free refreshments will be served in the Harvest Kitchen. Tickets, available at the door, are: \$5 for Adults; \$3 for Members, Senior Citizens and Students (6-18).

Hope to see you December 13th.



## Post Cards of Old Dutch Neck

These historic post cards showing Dutch Neck around the turn of the century were donations by Martin R. Winar. His continuing interest in assisting the Society's to collect and exhibit such historic resources is most gratefully acknowledged.





# A History of The Village of Dutch Neck

Shirley D. Holman, a lifelong resident of Dutch Neck, wrote the following history for a course at the New Jersey College for Women (now Rutgers). She has updated the information in her paper to share with **Broadside** readers.

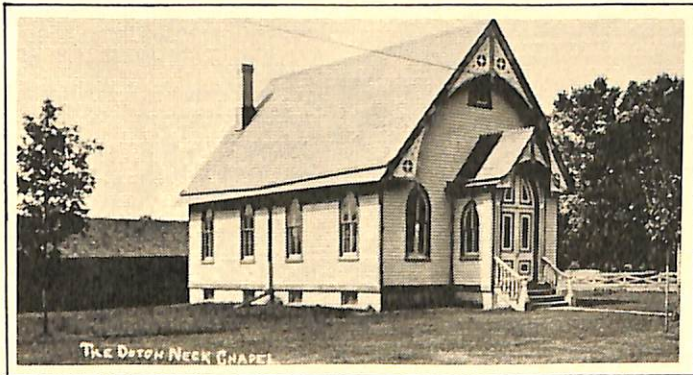
## The Town's Beginnings

The year 1737 marks the apparent settlement of the town of Dutch Neck by two Holland Dutch families from Long Island, the Voorhees and the Bergen families. This tract of land was given the name of Dutch Neck by these settlers. The word "neck" meant a tract of land in the Dutch language. The sturdy young Dutchmen cleared the land, built themselves homes, and settled down to make a living from the soil and to rear their families in the good old Dutch ways.

## The History of the Dutch Neck Presbyterian Church

Like other early settlements along the Atlantic seaboard, Dutch Neck seems to have had its beginning around a church. The first written record of a church in Dutch Neck is found in **The Record Book of West Windsor Township** under the entry date of April 2, 1801.

"Ordered by command that Abel Slayback repare the road from the Neck Meeting House towards Princetown upto the cross Road that lead to Tanny Swamp toward John Tindall's Mill."



Dutch Neck had originally been governed by meetings of men in this Neck Meeting House, but now it was a place of worship. William Post, the commissioner from the society known as the Neck Meeting House, had been sent when the Presbytery of Brunswick met in Lawrenceville on April 23, 1816, to ask the Presbytery to appoint the Reverend David Comfort to preach alternate Sundays at three o'clock in the afternoon until the next meeting of the Presbytery. Mr. Post also applied to the Presbytery to take steps for the organization of the new church. **The Records of the Presbytery of Brunswick** record this request under the entry date of June 14, 1815: "Whereas a number of people in the neighborhood of the Neck Meeting House have applied to this Presbytery for supplies. Presbytery agrees to grant their request."

The Reverend David Comfort proceeded without delay to the organization of the people into a congregation. There were twenty five members — twenty four coming

from the First Church of Cranbury and one from the Presbyterian Church of Kingston. The results of this congregational organization are recorded in **The Records of the Session of the Congregation of Dutch Neck**. "At a general meeting of the inhabitants of Dutch Neck according to publick notice from the Pulpit, Mr. John R. Covenhoven and Mr. Peter Hooper were chosen delegates to attend the meeting of the Presbytery of Brunswick, at Cranberry, the first day of October 1816, to apply for a supply for their pulpit, and also to obtain permission from the Presbytery to become organized as a congregation; be known by name of the Presbyterian Congregation of Dutch Neck." They again secured the Reverend Comfort and on October 20, 1816, he and the Dutch Neck inhabitants met at the church to choose suitable persons to officiate as ruling elders.

The applicants for church membership were thoroughly investigated, and the conduct of the church members was closely observed. The applicants were examined before the Session, which had to be satisfied with their moral character, their motives for wishing to become a member, and their knowledge of religion. The Session Records disclose a general inquiry on the deportment of new members. Two examples of this inquiry are the cases of Mrs. Mary Davis and Nancy (no last name given) who were suspended from the communion of the church because of immoral conduct. Mrs. Davis had been living with a Mr. John Voorhees while there was no evidence of her husband's death. Nancy, a Negro servant of a church member, had an illegitimate child.

During this time of close observing of church member behavior the Reverend Comfort was supply pastor, (A supply pastor did not preach every Sunday at one special church, Reverend Comfort preached alternate Sundays at the Dutch Neck Church, and when he was not preaching here, he was preaching at other churches.) When he performed a marriage ceremony, he was not paid in the usual manner of today. The girl's parents would invite him to dinner, give him a chicken or a pig, or do a special favor for him. In 1827, he was succeeded by the appointment of the church's first pastor, Reverend James Deruelle who preached until 1830. On December 24, 1827, three months after Reverend Deruelle was ordained, an important resolution was announced. All baptised children of the congregation under the age of twelve years were thereafter required to attend a Sabbath School regularly to learn the Westminster Catechism and to attend a Bible class weekly in the church. This was the beginning of the first Sunday School. The first Sunday School sessions were first held in a red schoolhouse in back of the cemetery and later in the church galleries.

Members of the Presbytery of Brunswick and professors and students from the Princeton Theological Seminary preached at the church between the years 1830-1840. During the next fifteen years, the Reverend George Ely divided his time between Dutch Neck and Nottingham (Hamilton) Square. One church activity at this time is noted in the **Princeton Whig** of August 13, 1845. "Temperance Harvest Home Held in Grove near Dutch Neck Church! Music by Allentown Band in Uniforms! Rev. George Ely opened with Prayer (Pastor of



Nottingham Square Ch.) Stacy C. Pott, Esq., of Trenton talked for 1 hour on 'Our hope is the School House and church.' John F. Hageman of Princeton talked for 2½ hours on temperance."

After the next minister, the Reverend Robert Manning who preached from 1855 until 1857, the Reverend Amzi L. Armstrong came to be pastor for the next forty years. It was during this time when Reverend Armstrong was pastor, that special note was made concerning the need for a chapel in the Minutes of the Session under the entry date of the Sunday School Anniversary held on November 16, 1879. "The House was packed to utmost capacity with one hundred persons outside who couldn't get in the vestibule. Were afraid the galleries would come down." Plans for a chapel were begun in 1881, and it was dedicated on July 4, 1882.

After Reverend Armstrong's retirement in 1900, the pulpit was occupied until 1906, by the Reverend Samuel Graham, from 1906 until 1921, by the Reverend Nathan Brown, and from 1921 until 1924, the Reverend Clark C. Alexander. In May of 1924, the Reverend Guy A. Bensinger was installed and occupied the pulpit until 1958. Reverend Bensinger was followed by: Robert Good (1959-62), James Weaver (1962-77), Kenneth Craig (1978-79), Interim minister (1980-81) Robert Seaman, and the present pastor, Floyd Churn, (1982-present).

It was ten years after Reverend Armstrong's retirement, on Thanksgiving Eve in 1910, when he and Mrs. Armstrong were shot and killed by Jack Sears, a mulatto, while they were sitting in their living room. Jack Sears and his mother had been taken in by the Armstrongs when Jack was a baby. He thought that he would inherit their property and money because the Armstrongs had no children. After he killed them, he went by trolley to New Brunswick. When he returned to Dutch Neck later that evening, he went to the neighbors and reported that thieves had ransacked the house and killed Reverend and Mrs. Armstrong. No evidence was found to convict Sears at that time, but later when the townsmen were preparing the house furnishing for a public sale, they found Reverend Armstrong's gold watch that was supposed to have been taken by the thieves. The finding of this watch led to further investigations and finally to Sears' confession. Sears was the first in Mercer County to die by electrocution.

Reverend Armstrong's death was a great loss to his devoted congregation. The members of the church erected a plaque in his honor which reads:

In Memoriam

Reverend Amzi Lewis Armstrong  
Born 1827 Died 1910

This tablet is erected in abiding affection by this church which he served with singular devotion and untiring zeal during his whole ministerial life.

Pastor 1857-1900  
Pastor Emeritus 1900-1910

"He was a good man and full of the Holy Ghost and faith."

The present church, a conventional white clapboard building with a steeple and bell, had a membership of 343 (1952); 637 (1987). The Sunday School sessions were held in the gothic chapel which had new sections added in 1909, 1924, and 1939. There were 305 boys and girls enrolled in the Sunday School (1952). In 1987, 94 are enrolled. Chapel was sold to the Township in 1966 after the Christian Education Building was built in 1964. Thereafter, the Chapel became the Municipal Court and Library until 1983. In 1987 the building was remodelled to house offices of the Board of Education.

In the graveyard, one of the earliest headstones is dated 1771. Members of the Covenhoven, Hooper, Post, and Slayback families are among those buried beside the church.



### The History of Education in Dutch Neck

About thirty years after the church's organization came the first schoolhouse which consisted of a small log house built by the united effort of the male inhabitants of the town who desired their children to have an education. This log house was erected in the cemetery lot in the rear of the church. A reference to the early school is an item found in the **Princeton Whig** of January 8, 1850. "School house burned at Dutch Neck! On Friday last the school house was burned with all contents. It is supposed to have been the work of an incendiary." After the first schoolhouse was burned, a new one room building was founded on the edge of the town. Later another room was added. During this time the Dutch Neck School was spoken of a "payschool." The head of each family whose children attended this school, paid the teacher a stated sum per pupil. The township also contributed money to be devoted to the support of the school. The statistics for the school year ending August 31, 1880, show 60 of the 73 children between the ages of five and eighteen, enrolled in this school.

Because of the increasing enrollment, a new brick and stone school was begun in 1917. This four room schoolhouse still did not suffice for the growing enrollment, and another addition of two rooms was made in 1927. The entry of April 14, 1928, in the West Windsor Township Minutes show the town's interest in the education of the poor children at this school. During this year money was appropriated for the purpose of educating the poor children. In March 1952, a new modern section consisting of a gymnasium and six class rooms was added to the six room school. (See also article on the Dutch Neck School in this issue.)



## Business in Dutch Neck

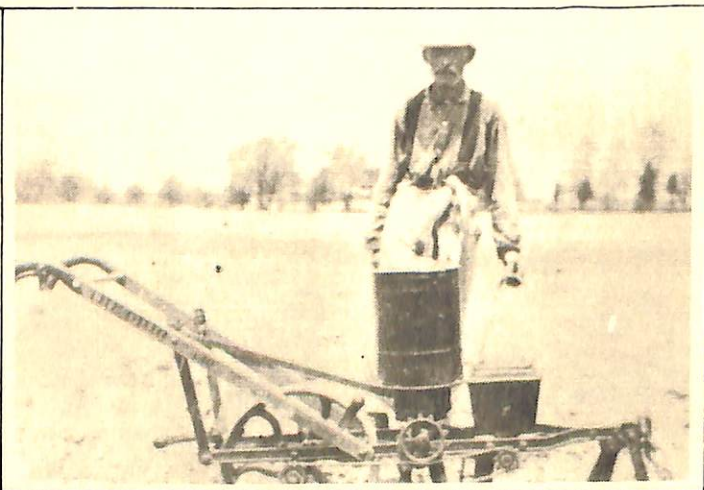
The first known business in Dutch Neck was that of a tavern run by the Bergen family about a half a century after the apparent settlement of the town. The township books list the innkeepers after 1811. Peter Bergen from 1811 to 1816, Nathaniel Labaw, who ran the tavern in 1823 to 1825, was also constable in 1823 and "Keeper of the Pound" in 1824. Eli Rodgers, landlord between 1828 and 1842, was likewise pound keeper in 1828, constable in 1840, and overseer of the poor in 1842. The Township records note a meeting that was held at this tavern, but there was some doubt as to whether this referred to a residence or to an inn. "At a Town Meeting held at the House of Jacob G. Bergen on Monday the 8th Day of April 1797 —" An item in the **Trenton True American** eight years later seems to settle this question. "Major Morford's Battalion, at the Widow Bergen's Tavern, near Neck-Meeting House, on Friday the 10th day of Oct. next at 10 o'clock A.M."

About 1883, the tavern was closed, moved to South Mill Road, and converted into a residence. The deed for the house, owned by the Updike family, carries a clause that it may never be opened for entertainment of the traveling public.

There are several other businesses noted since 1834. One dealt in mowing and reaping machines, feeders, and potato planters, and another made carriages. During the 1860's, a blacksmith shop was located on part of the cemetery lot, they also made coffins when necessary.

From the 1890s until 1939 the general store and Dutch Neck post office were run together at the corner of Village and Mill Roads across from the church. The Dutch Neck post office then was moved to several locations: 1939-49 - Home of Mrs. Smallbone, South Mill Road (moved to 528 Village Road West); 1949-52 back to the general store; 1952-70 - Hannah Tindall at 408 Village Road East; back to the general store; then to Alexander Road, next to the firehouse (1987-Galletta's Galley). In July 1970 the Princeton Junction post office opened on the Princeton-Hightstown Road, giving West Windsor Township one post office and five zip codes.

Other Dutch Neck businesses included: Hiram A. Cook and Son (farm implements, hardware and plumbing), L.C. Bowers and Sons (builders), H.H. Mather (painting) and Harry D. Applegate's Garage.



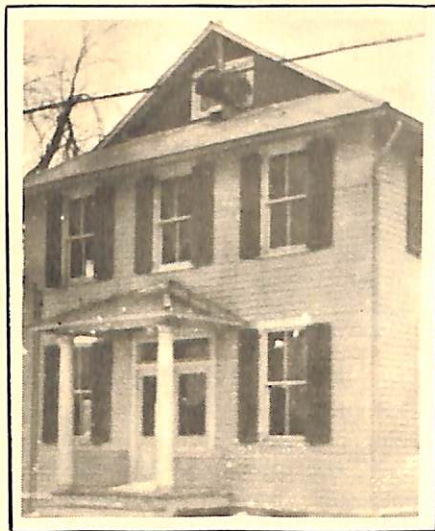
## Organizations in Dutch Neck

The earliest organization, the West Windsor Mutual Fire Insurance Association, was organized by authority of an act of the legislature on March 17, 1857. The West Windsor Pursuing and Detecting Society was organized in 1882, but has not functioned since 1945. Its original purpose was to find stolen horses and wagons. Washington Camp No. 180, Patriotic Order Sons of America of Dutch Neck was instituted on March 11, 1913. The Volunteer Fire Company of Dutch Neck was formed on March 5, 1921. On March 5, 1929, this company was changed and organized as the West Windsor Volunteer Fire Company. The Fire Company started with a Ford "T" truck with chemical tanks. In 1939, a new modern pump was put on the red engine so that the truck could use water instead of chemicals. Several years ago the company purchased a new fire engine — the pumper type. In 1946, the fire company purchased a lot on South Mill Road, building a new firehouse and recreation hall in 1952. The Dutch Neck Y.M.C.A. was organized in 1924 and disbanded in the early 1950s.

## Dutch Neck in General

There are several references concerning the commercial life, population, and a general description of the town. **Gordon's Gazetteer (1834)** said that Dutch Neck "contains a tavern and three or four stores, and has a population of 100." **Boyd's 1874 Trenton Directory** listed a store, a carpenter, a blacksmith, a wheelwright, several shoemakers, a mail contractor, a hotel owner, and several painters. In 1875, Everts and Stewart's **Atlas of Mercer County** remarked that it was a "thriving little village, pleasantly situated in the center of a fine agricultural country, and that it contained one general store, a wheelwright shop, a blacksmithy, a hotel, a common school, and a Presbyterian church, with an estimated population of seventy-five." **Hageman's History of Burlington and Mercer Counties, New Jersey** said that in 1883, it was a "thriving little village with a population of 80, pleasantly situated in the center of the best agricultural section of the township, and that it contained one general store, wheelright shop, blacksmith shop, office of the West Windsor Fire Insurance Association, Presbyterian Church, and a nearly completed fine chapel belonging to the same denomination." In 1887, Killenberger's **Pocket Gazetteer** noted that the village has a population of 100 and is connected with Trenton by a daily stage. The listing in **McBride's Industrial Directory** for 1927, indicated the stability of life in the village. "Population 106. Banking town, Princeton or Hightstown. Money order post office, telephone, but no telegraph."





TOWN HALL

Around Dutch Neck in 1952 there were 3000 acres of land devoted to potato farming. In 1987 — 92 acres (Grover Farm). In 1931, a Dutch Neck farmer won a gold medal as the champion potato grower of the State. Previously, farmers raised sheep on these same farms. At a meeting on April 9, 1929, a note was made in the **Minutes of West Windsor Township**, concerning the payments made to the farmers for damage to their sheep by unknown dogs.

Descendents of original settler families still reside in Dutch Neck. The Tindall families are all descended from William Tyndall, of England, the Bible translator. In 1952 Sara Bergen lived on Village Road, she was the first principal of the Dutch Neck School. The Covenhoven family, now Conover, is represented by Walter Conover.

Today, developments fill the farm land, roads are filled to capacity and yet the village feeling still remains at the crossroads of Village and Mill Roads.

— Shirley D. Holman

Margaret Tindall has kindly allowed us to make copies of photographs from her personal album showing Dutch Neck.

## Acquisitions

- Wedding slip c1900, Aberdeen Scotland, donated by Martha Redi.
- Marriage Certificate 1901 of Barclay D. Schenck to Sarah Louise Updyke at Baptist Parsonage, Penns Neck, donated by Alice Schenck Parker.
- School and church school certificates and books dating from the early 1900s donated by Kenneth Conover and Leone Conover Tindall
- Clippings, photo and cemetery receipts in connection with Grover Family donated by Elise and Spencer Bruno.
- Postcard with Dutch Neck postmark and Dutch Neck related message, showing South Mill Road donated by Martin Winar.
- Summer dress c1930 donated by Barbara Benedict.

All these donations are greatly appreciated for present exhibitions and future permanent display. Our thanks to all these generous donors.

## Sponsorship

This issue is sponsored in part by a donation from Elise and Spencer Bruno, for which our grateful thanks.

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