

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT AND AGENCIES CONSULTED

A meeting of selected interested participants was held at the New Mexico Farm and Ranch Heritage Museum, Las Cruces, on September 20, 2000. The purpose of the meeting was to

- learn about public concerns, issues, expectations, and values;
- educate people about the planning process, issues, and proposed management actions (the addition to the visitor center, interpretation of the Buffalo Soldiers, and preservation considerations for the ruins of the fort structures);
- learn about the values placed by others on the resources and the visitor experience; and
- build support among local residents, groups, visitors, government agencies, and others for implementing the plan.

Invited participants were as many people, organizations, and agencies as possible that may be affected by or have a stake in the outcome of the planning and implementation decisions. People living in the immediate area of Fort Selden who may be affected by its use, a sample of visitors, and people who use the facilities also were invited. Those attending are listed below under “Participants.”

In addition, the following agencies were contacted during preparation of the plan:

- Historic Preservation Division, Office of Cultural Affairs, State of New Mexico, Santa Fe
- Public History Program, New Mexico State University, Las Cruces

MEETING SUMMARY

Michael Taylor, then Deputy Director, State Monuments Division, opened the meeting by stating the legislation providing to design a plan for an addition to the museum and exhibits honoring the Buffalo Soldiers and to plan for the preservation and interpretation of the ruins at Fort Selden State Monument. Taylor welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced the planning team: José Cisneros, new Director of State Monuments; Elva Melendrez and Nathan Stone from Fort Selden State Monument; and consultants Steven Kells, Tony Crosby, Sheron Smith-Savage, and Troy Thompson. Taylor then asked the invited participants to introduce themselves, state their organizational affiliations, if any, and describe their association and/or past experiences with Fort Selden.

Director **José Cisneros** mentioned the restraints placed on the state monuments by the limited financial resources. He also said this process is the first planning done for Fort Selden after 36 years as a state property. He emphasized that the planning covers all aspects of the monument property, not just the ruins. He also expressed his interest in increasing the visibility of and visitation to the monument.

Taylor asked Elva Melendrez and Nathan Stone to provide a brief military history of the fort. Stone explained that the staff tailors their tours to suit the groups and the situations; thus, the tours vary considerably. Stone briefly summarized the Mogollon occupation of the site, the early Spanish contact, and the development of the Camino Real along a natural avenue of travel. All these played a role in the ultimate siting of Fort Selden by the United States military in 1865. Stone discussed the early responsibilities and duties of the soldiers as well as the tedium suffered by soldiers stationed at this isolated fort. The first regular army troops to occupy the post included members of the 125th infantry—part of the groups known as the Buffalo Soldiers. The fort was constructed of adobe, which deteriorated rapidly after the military ordered removal of all salvageable building lumber when the post was abandoned in

1878 and again in 1891. Elva Melendrez then contributed insight for meeting participants into the roles women played at the fort.

Michael Taylor followed with a 20-minute slide presentation describing the administrative history of the fort, including past adobe stabilization and test wall projects, and the past collaborations with the Getty Conservation Institute. Taylor also touched on some management issues, which were discussed later in the day.

Sheron Smith-Savage, planning consultant, gave an overview of the management planning process. The plan first identifies the purpose and significance of the site, then develops objectives for desired future conditions and identifies management issues. Part of the process is identifying what people would like to see happen at the monument, which was this meeting's purpose. In addition, the State Monuments Division is interested in identifying ways that Fort Selden can collaborate with other individuals, groups, and agencies for mutual benefit.

Participants received a brief chronology of the history of the area and site. As with many historic sites, multiple layers of occupation occurred on the monument property and on the surrounding properties that once were part of the military reservation. Prehistoric occupation on the monument property is evidenced by possible pit structure ruins and a reported flexed burial, exhumed from the parade grounds while the fort was still in operation. Limited archaeological studies also have recorded lithics, ground stone, and pottery shards.

In the first recorded history of the area, don Juan de Oñate camped on the Rio Grande in 1598 at a ford that now bears the name of Pedro Robledo, an officer who died and was buried there. Although the Robledo campsite has not been located, it is in the vicinity of Fort Selden. Robledo continued as a campsite on the road between Santa Fe and Chihuahua City for almost 300 years; the U.S. military referred to the Robledo site when selecting the location for the post in 1865.

Important aspects of Fort Selden's history include the Native Americans who lived in the area and the events that led to the need for a U.S. military presence. Near present-day El Paso, Oñate encountered Manso Indians, a group that may have occupied an area as far north as Hatch, New Mexico. Other historic groups have not been well researched for the purposes of understanding Fort Selden and should be part of future studies.

The creation of peace establishments by the Spanish and the later cancellation of rations to the Apaches by the Mexicans played an important role in the deterioration of relationships between Apaches and colonizers. In addition, the Mexican government's hiring of scalp hunters, some of whom were active in southern New Mexico, also contributed to strained relationships.

Fort Fillmore was established near La Mesilla in the 1850s but was abandoned in 1862. In 1865, Fort Selden was established at the southern end of the Jornada del Muerto to "provide for the better protection of the Mesilla Valley, and to lessen the perils of the Jornada del Muerto." Only a small portion of the original four-mile-square military reservation comprises the state monument. The post cemetery is in Leasburg Dam State Park, although the military individuals were later removed to Santa Fe.

The community of Leasburg is also an important aspect of the fort's history. Leasburg, established soon after the fort, provided controversial entertainment for the lonely men on the frontier.

Black troops arrived at Fort Selden in 1866. Their numbers were never more than equal to that of whites, and they served only eight years total at the post. Their history is important, and they will be interpreted in the new addition to the visitor center.

Some soldiers left sweethearts or wives at home, or they went into Las Cruces and La Mesilla to catch glimpses or dance with the young women there. The few women who actually lived at the fort included Lydia Spencer Lane, who recalled only four other women when she was there. Stories of women at other forts have ties to

Selden, such as that of Josephine Clifford, assisted by commanders at forts along the way in her escape from an abusive husband, a soldier at Fort Bayard. As at most forts, Selden had laundresses. But perhaps the most important women were the prostitutes of Leasburg, whose stories have not been told.

With diminished Indian threats as well as the need for the soldiers elsewhere to participate in the Victorio campaign, Fort Selden's importance declined, and it was ordered abandoned in 1878. In 1880 however, with construction of the railroad, the fort was reactivated. Five miles of the railroad cut across the reservation. The arrival of the railroad changed the movement of military troops and enabled consolidation of companies into larger facilities. Many of the one- and two-company forts would be abandoned. By 1887, final abandonment of Fort Selden was ordered, and the last troops left in January of 1891.

The original fort structures were poorly and inexpensively built, typical of frontier posts. Thus, Fort Selden's history is filled with building, repairing, and abandoning structures. With removal of salvageable lumber by the military during the short year and a half abandonment of the fort from 1878 to 1880, many buildings deteriorated to the point of being unusable. Through the ensuing years after final abandonment, the structures have been subject to vandalism, but today the ruins remain as tangible reminders of our past.

Issues facing Fort Selden State Monument today include the following:

1. preservation of the site's historic and prehistoric fabric, which includes its very important archaeology as well as the ruins
2. interpretation of an over 10,000-acre military reservation on a 21-acre site
3. modern intrusions on the historic scene, including those of its own creation—the visitor center, parking lot, and adobe test walls
4. financial constraints, which affect the operation, interpretation, and preservation of the site
5. increasing the number of visitors, as so often museums must justify themselves by the number of people who actually come to the site and not including those who are reached through other means.

Steven Kells, architect, addressed the visitor center addition and renovation. The management plan, including interpretive themes, will be completed before the architectural program is written for the visitor center. The design of the museum should accommodate how these themes will be interpreted, including possible traditional display of artifacts, interactive exhibits, and other possible methods of interpretation. Problems noted with the existing visitor center include:

1. The building is too small.
2. The exhibit space has no room for traveling exhibits.
3. No meeting/presentation space is available.
4. No view of the ruins is provided from inside the visitor center; this view is needed for supervision of the ruins and for interpretive purposes, especially for the mobility impaired.
5. The building does not comply with requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA); the trails and parking lot also may not be in compliance.
6. Work and maintenance areas are inadequate or lacking both inside and outside the structure.
7. Storage of all types is inadequate.
8. The visitor center and the parking lot visually intrude on the ruins and encroach on the archaeological resources as well as the historic landscape of the fort.
9. The powder magazine ruins near the visitor center's north side limit the expansion of the museum in that direction; a comprehensive archaeological survey of the site is needed to determine the extent of other ruins or scatter areas, unknown at this time.

A question was asked about the possibility of complete replacement of the visitor center building. This scenario is not being considered at the present time.

Architectural conservator **Tony Crosby** discussed the causes of adobe deterioration in general and then specifically as related to the Fort Selden ruins. The primary source of adobe degradation is water. The actual binding together of the soil particles, sand, silt, and clay is primarily a process of dehydration, and thus the degradation of adobe is primarily a process of hydration as water again gains access to the soil. The soil particles, held together by cohesion, fail as the cohesion fails.

Water primarily accesses the Fort Selden adobes from rainfall occurring on the tops, sides, and end walls of all the adobe ruins. Water secondarily accesses the walls through capillary action at the bases of the walls. Water mechanically erodes the surface material when the surface becomes wet, loses cohesion and is carried down the surface as liquid. Water also moves into the walls and causes cracks in the walls when the moisture content is high enough. The loss of cohesion of the adobe at Fort Selden has occurred on all the exposed surfaces, including the tops and ends where the resulting failure is more obvious.

When Fort Selden was abandoned, deterioration of the adobe materials and building systems began immediately. The deterioration occurred not only because of natural processes of material decay but also because the overall integrity of the building systems was reduced—the ability of the buildings to act and react as systems rather than as individual components. This disintegration occurred after protective wood building elements were removed: roofs, floors, lintels over openings, doors, and windows. Without this removal, many of the buildings might have remained intact and recognizable well into the late twentieth century. As of today, the remains are hardly recognizable as buildings; their main characteristics are of isolated standing adobe walls.

Deterioration of the structures can be seen since photographs were made of them in the 1920s (Figure 9).



Figure 9. This photograph was taken by Gertrude Hill on July 4, 1926, only 35 years after Fort Selden was abandoned. Courtesy of Museum of New Mexico, Negative No. 1794

Since that time walls have collapsed, wall openings representing former windows and doors have been reduced to low walls connecting higher wall fragments, wall heights are greatly reduced, and wall thicknesses have eroded differentially, often to less than half their original thickness. While the rate of decay appears to be relatively constant over the past hundred years, some wall collapses have resulted in greater loss over relatively short periods. Adobe decay is relatively constant over long periods followed by accelerated decay over relatively short periods, until the building features reach a state of overall cohesion loss followed by accelerated loss until the features no longer exist. The majority of the wall fragments of the Fort Selden ruins appear to be rapidly approaching this phase of the decay process.

The extent of the adobe wall ruins vary from some walls 10 feet above grade in the Company Quarters to standing walls only inches high and inches thick in the corral area. Remains of adobe walls at grade also continue to erode. Stone features also occur at grade, such as the foundations of the Commanding Officer's residence and other, unexplored subsurface features.

Decay at Fort Selden is exhibited primarily in the deterioration of the tops of walls, the exposed ends of walls, and the overall wall surfaces. Simply stated, this decay reduces the

heights, lengths, and vertical thicknesses of the walls. While wall base erosion also occurs, it may not happen as seriously now as previously. The distinct overall weathering patterns appear related directly to the direction of the rainfall, which over the long exposure period has been primarily from the northwest. Weather patterns change from year to year, however, and local rainstorms exhibit different patterns. Nevertheless, the overall patterns are exhibited in distinct erosion on the west- and north-facing surfaces, which has resulted in a greater degree of surface undulations and a tapered shape at the tops of wall surfaces facing west and north.

While the surface erosion is the most obvious sign of deterioration, clumping of the tops and ends of walls will result in much greater traumatic loss. This loss will occur in large clumps rather than through slower erosion resulting from rain falling on the surface. Clumping is the result of wall portions that are subjected to more water absorption and that are less “restrained” by a surrounding adobe wall mass. The tops and ends of these walls can crack more severely, thereby becoming separated from the surrounding material into clumps of adobe material. The clumps are then subject to displacement by a combination of wind and rain and by side-loading by such factors as high winds or leaning or shoving by humans. On the wall ends, the clumps often fall because the walls beneath cannot support their weights. The ends of several walls in the Officers’ Quarters were probably displaced by someone pushing on the walls.

In addition, one of the most critical conditions causing material loss is the detachment of adobes in layers up to 2 inches thick. This condition occurs on all vertical wall surfaces and does not appear to be related to the direction the wall faces. The evidence of detachment is determined by lightly tapping on the wall surface. Variations in the resulting hollow sound indicate the relative thickness and degree of detachment. During field investigations, Crosby determined that material in several areas recently had scaled or flaked off the wall surface.

In some cases, a pattern of surface cracks is also associated with the detachment, particularly on north and east walls. The detachment indicated by sounding, however, indicates that detachment also exists where relatively few surface cracks occur. The south- and west-facing walls presently have much fewer surface cracks; this condition may exist because the heaviest June rain came from the northeast, affecting those wall surfaces most recently.

Mud drips present on wall surfaces facing east and north also probably result from the most recent heavy rains and do not represent a multiyear pattern. Drips on west- and south-facing walls occur in isolated areas, whereas the drips on east- and particularly north-facing walls exist on the entire wall surface, top to bottom. The mud drips can also be seen beneath the tops of walls where rainwater has turned the soil into a liquid that quickly dried as it flowed down the walls.

Surface detachment also is evidenced by dry powdery soil falling from behind the surface, often from a surface crack, when the surface is tapped. This condition indicates complete detachment from the adobe substrate, and the amount of soil falling is an indicator of the severity of the condition. The loss of adobe fabric in detached layers can occur until surface erosion removes the surface, and cracks form and isolate other small areas, which then become detached and eventually fall.

The effects of erosion in the 109 years since Fort Selden’s abandonment in 1891 have caused the loss of approximately 85 percent of the adobe walls. A large portion of the loss occurred shortly after the wood roofs, floors, and window and door supports were removed, with more occurring from that time until initial preservation efforts began in the 1970s. Crosby estimates that of the overall 85 percent loss, 75 percent occurred during the 80-year period from the 1890s until the 1970s, and the remaining 10 percent occurred over the later 25-year period.

Present preservation treatments consist of applying a “sacrificial” coating to some wall surfaces, repairing basal erosion, filling cracks in plaster and in walls, backfilling low walls,

applying mud to the tops of some walls, controlling rodents, and grading the ground at wall bases for positive drainage. The locations of wall treatments depend on a wall's conditions or its location in relationship to the visitors' trail. Treatments also may vary if a wall is interpreted differently from another. These basic treatment approaches should continue as part of future preservation plans, although modifications should be made to adhere to the overall preservation and interpretive approaches to the site.

The adobe walls cannot be preserved indefinitely, regardless of the amount of effort expended, but a comprehensive preservation maintenance plan can help retard the rate of loss. While protective shelters may be part of a future solution, increased preservation maintenance will continue to be important. Any walls covered by a shelter will have to be protected by maintenance, although perhaps to a lesser degree. The present staff size is not large enough to adequately carry out the comprehensive preservation maintenance program needed.

Shelter designer **Troy Thompson** said his work will respond to the work being done by others on the project. He gave an overview of the reasons to shelter or not to shelter. The notion of constructing shelters over ruins is relatively new. Thompson provided illustrations of several different approaches to shelters. This meeting occurs at the beginning of a decision-making process regarding the best solution for the Fort Selden ruins. The State Monuments Division is interested in the possibilities of a solution that combines a shelter design with the appearance of reconstruction. The expenses to construct and maintain any shelter are balanced against the benefits to the cultural resources.

Erica Avrami, Getty Conservation Institute, Los Angeles, California, facilitated the participant input portion of the meeting. Avrami explained her presentation system and asked everyone to actively participate. Participants were asked to respond to the following topics:

- historical aspects
- physical aspects

- uses/potential uses of Fort Selden State Monument
- concerns/threats
- collaboration

After the meeting, copies of the meeting summary and results were mailed to all participants, allowing two weeks for their review. Topics with suggestions resulting from the meeting follow. No additional input was received from mail-outs to the participants.

Historical Aspects

Prehistory

- Geo-environmental development
- "Pre-people"
- Native Americans
 - Early peoples
 - Mogollon
- Emphasize all cultures of the area
- Art/Artifacts
- Petroglyphs/Pictographs
- Agriculture
- Irrigation/Role of water
- Rio Grande
- Hot springs
- Flora/Fauna
- Trade
- Community relationships

Hispanic era

- Oñate
- Robledo paraje
- Camino Real
- Rio Grande
- Missions
- Hispanic–Native American relations
- Apaches
- Doña Ana land grant
- U.S./Mexican War
- Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo
- Gadsden purchase

Columbian exchange
 Art/Artifacts
 Agriculture
 Irrigation/Role of water
 Hot springs
 Mining
 Flora/Fauna
 Trade
 Horse husbandry
 Community relationships

Fort Selden era

Westward expansion
 Frontier life
 Confederate troops
 Fort Selden military reservation
 Fort responsibilities
 Established to protect
 travelers/settlers
 Relationships with other forts
 Buffalo Soldiers
 Black infantry
 Role of 125th infantry
 Women
 Wives
 Girlfriends back home
 Laundresses
 Prostitutes
 Children
 Dependents
 Architecture
 Territorial style
 Construction of fort and ancillary
 structures
 Construction technology
 Ferry/Rio Grande
 Cemetery
 Native Americans
 Identification of groups
 Identification of individuals
 Desire to maintain areas they occupied
 and resistance to settlement by
 Hispanics and U.S.
 Battles and players
 Political impacts [of ?]
 Leasburg
 Saloons
 Brothel
 Relationship to fort

Relationship to Las Cruces and La Mesilla
 Military presence
 Soldiers' social life
 Limestone quarry
 Heliograph
 Railroad
 Fort reactivated because of railroad
 Presence of railroad in the West in late
 19th century
 Occupations
 Trappers
 Mining
 Art/Artifacts
 Agriculture
 Irrigation/Role of water
 Flora/Fauna
 Hot springs
 Trade
 Horse/Mule husbandry
 Community relationships

Postoccupation

Water war
 World War I homestead(s)
 Trinity explosion 1945
 Elephant Butte irrigation district
 Shalem Colony
 Landownership history of entire military
 reservation
 20th-century auto tourism
 Community use of fort property
 Vandalism/Disregard of historic value of fort
 Preservation efforts
 Leasburg Dam State Park
 Flora/Fauna
 Community relationships

Physical Aspects

Archaeology
 Native American sites/Archaeology
 Location of earlier cultural components
 Petroglyphs/Pictographs
 Landmarks
 Robledo peak

Organ Mountains
 Strategic siting of fort
 Relationship to other forts
 Location near Rio Grande
 Paraje on Camino Real
 Chihuahuan desert
 Historic site of Fort Selden military reservation
 Historic integrity of site
 Backdrop for re-enactment
 Historic development of the military reservation
 Outline/Plan of fort
 Relationship of fort components
 Building technology
 Location of trees in historic fort setting
 Flagpole
 Fort cemetery
 Location of railroad
 Ruins
 Aesthetics of ruins in relation to overall site
 Romance of the ruins
 Condition of walls
 Interpretive aspects
 Museum and visitor center
 Paths and trails
 Adobe test walls
 Leasburg Dam State Park
 Access to interstate highway

Uses/Potential Uses

Education

School children
 Education of children
 School trips
 Educational internships
 Educational topics:
 History of childhood education at the fort
 Historical camp of military instruction
 Preservation of historic traditions
 Desert/Riparian education
 Archaeology field school
 Historic preservation field school
 Adobe preservation field school
 Conservation workshops
 Historic construction demonstrations

Hands-on classes [no topic specified, but could apply to a number of programs]

Visitation and Interpretation

Visitation
 Group tours
 Tourism infrastructure and marketing
 Visitor information center
 Special events
 (Frontier Days and others)
 Interpretation
 Military museum
 Reconstruction of a building
 Interpret all eras!
 Interpretation by Native Americans
 Interpretation by Native Americans of Indian Wars
 Living history
 Re-enactments
 Hiking trail to Leasburg Dam State Park
 Nature trail to state lands on other side of Rio Grande, formerly part of Fort Selden military reservation
 Virtual tours

Outreach
 Web page
www.museumofnewmexico.org
www.nm.oca.org

Gift shop
 Bathroom stop
 Rest stop
 Picnic tables

Community Uses and Special Events

Exhibits
 Traveling exhibits
 Public art
 Educational
 Nighttime events
 Speaker/Lecture series
 Sky Safari stargazing
 Special events
 Period weddings
 Amphitheatre—performances
 Tours
 Guided bus tour, Janos to Fort Selden and vice versa
 Military site horseback tour, several days

Tourism Connections

- Economic tourism
- Related sites:
 - Leasburg Dam State Park
 - Sister fort(s)
 - Camino Real
 - Indian sites of Doña Ana County
 - LC River Park
 - Chihuahuan Desert Park
- Boots and Saddles
- Way station for Camino Real
- Scenic byway site for Camino Real
- Binational tourist site
- Bicycle tours
- Recreational trail along the Rio Grande

Other

- Community cooperation through volunteers
- Adobe preservation partnership with Department of Labor
- International center for adobe preservation
- Flora/Fauna
- Wildlife studies

Concerns/Threats

- Stewardship
- Effective planning
- Loss of context
 - Relationship of ruins to context
 - Intrusion of Leasburg Dam State Park
- View sheds
- Direction of interpretive program
 - Overemphasis on architectural aspects
 - Visitor desires and concerns
 - Interpreting for all segments of the population
 - Romantic interpretation
- Balance of preservation, interpretation, and accessibility
- Archaeology
 - Loss of archaeological resources
 - Need for more comprehensive archaeological survey
 - New and nontraditional techniques
- Ruins
 - Integrity of original fabric
 - "Readability" of ruins

- Visibility of original fabric
- Intrusion of interventions
- Differentiating new from old
- Ruins vs. reconstructed buildings
- Is ruins stabilization possible?
- Preservation timeline and longevity
- Interpretation of preservation measures
- Multiple definitions of integrity
- Vandalism
 - Increased use⇒increased vandalism
- Weathering of fabric
- Survival of native plants
- Lack of staff
 - Need for additional volunteers
 - Identifying professional assistance
- Location of utilities
- ADA compliance
- Funding
 - Lack of funds
 - Sources for funds
- Public relations plan
 - Overall team
 - Monies—lobby
 - Future

Collaboration

- Advocacy
- Government agencies
 - Leasburg Dam State Park
 - Fort Bliss Military Museum
 - White Sands Missile Range
 - Department of Labor—job training
 - New Mexico Corrections Department—prison workers
 - New Mexico Highway Department—signage
 - Americorps
 - Youth Conservation Corps
 - National Park Service
 - Fort Davis National Historic Site
 - U.S. Department of Agriculture—parks for children
 - U.S. Department of Defense—Boots and Saddles
 - ICTEA funds
 - Office of Mexican/U.S. Affairs
 - International Boundary Commission
 - Congressional delegation
 - Mexican agencies
 - INAH

Mimbres Paquimé

Landowners

Archaeology

- Archaeological societies
- For archaeological survey
- Office of Cultural Affairs, Historic Preservation Division—funding for archaeological survey; information on archaeology on state lands around the fort
- Bureau of Land Management—information on archaeology on lands around the fort
- National Park Service—remote sensing, black-and-white photographs
- Human Systems Research—archaeological studies, and so forth

Mescalero nation/reservation

Camino Real organizations

National Park Service, especially for survey

Historical society

New Mexico State University—research, internships, interpreters, museum exhibits

Military groups

- U.S. Cavalry Association
- Gen. Colin Powell

EBID

Las Cruces Convention and Visitors Bureau—attendance

Mesilla Valley Museum Consortium

New Mexico welcome centers

Heritage tourism

- Sen. Bingaman working on Paquimé to Silver City tour

Service Elder Hostel

Volunteers to build trails

Scenic Byways

Society of Cyclists

Bird watching and nature organizations

- Audubon Society
- Native Plant Society

Equestrian groups

Car shows

Participants

The following agencies and individuals participated in the September 20, 2000, meeting in Las Cruces:

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Cynthia Risner-Schiller
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 the planning process]

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In addition, the following agencies and
 individuals were invited but did not participate:

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