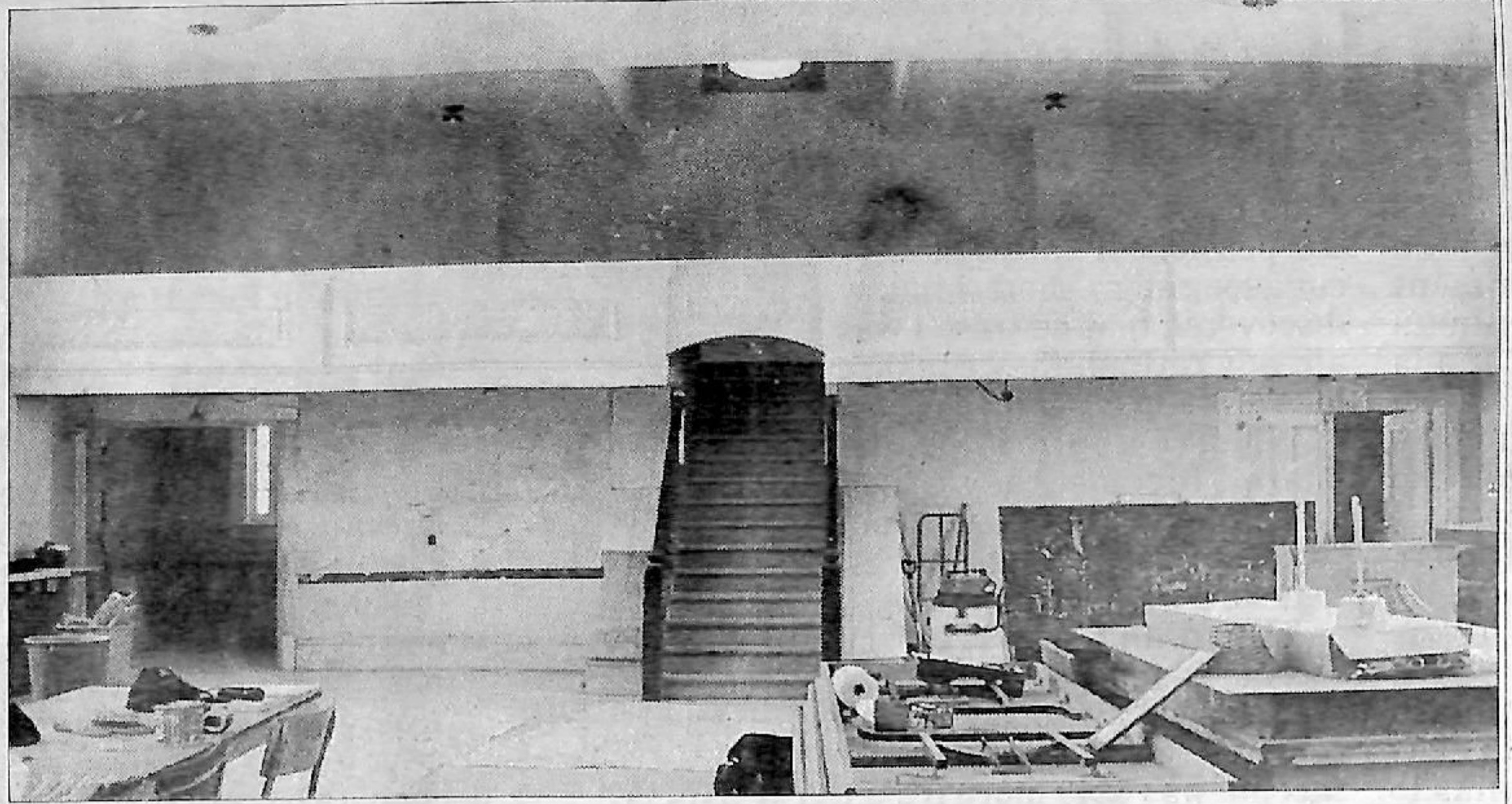


Local News



November 2007: The sagging balcony in Castleton



March 2008: The balcony has been levelled.

Discoveries and delight as Castleton Town Hall restoration continues

By Mandy Martin

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As the restoration of Castleton Town Hall continues, there have been moments of discovery and delight.

When contractors, Fisher Construction, removed the painted plywood panelling surrounding the stage area, the original curved wooden stage skirting was revealed.

"It's a beautiful curved front," Cramahe Township's chief building official Natalie

Moroz-Cornell says.

The height of the stage remains the same, so no structural challenges are posed by the latest architectural reveal.

With Trillium Fund grant money, the project has seen the realignment and restoration of the hall's balcony.

"It was sagging terribly, about 4.5 inches, although it looked a lot worse," Ms. Moroz-Cornell says. "There's a bearing wall under the balcony so that was gradually jacked up from the basement library level. It was done

gradually. It took at least two weeks. Now, it looks wonderful."

The project engineer has yet to rate the balcony for maximum seating.

"Because the construction was over 100 years old, lumber sizes are different and there are unconventional building methods — not built to today's code, so the engineer has to take measurements and make specific calculations. There will be a maximum posted limit."

Work at the hall is "going very, very well," Ms. Moroz-Cornell says.

"We're working on barrier-free washrooms now. On the library level (basement), we will be using the old jail cell. The window has the bars."

Cause for more delight was the recovery of the original jail cell door. It was located locally and was to have been returned this past weekend.

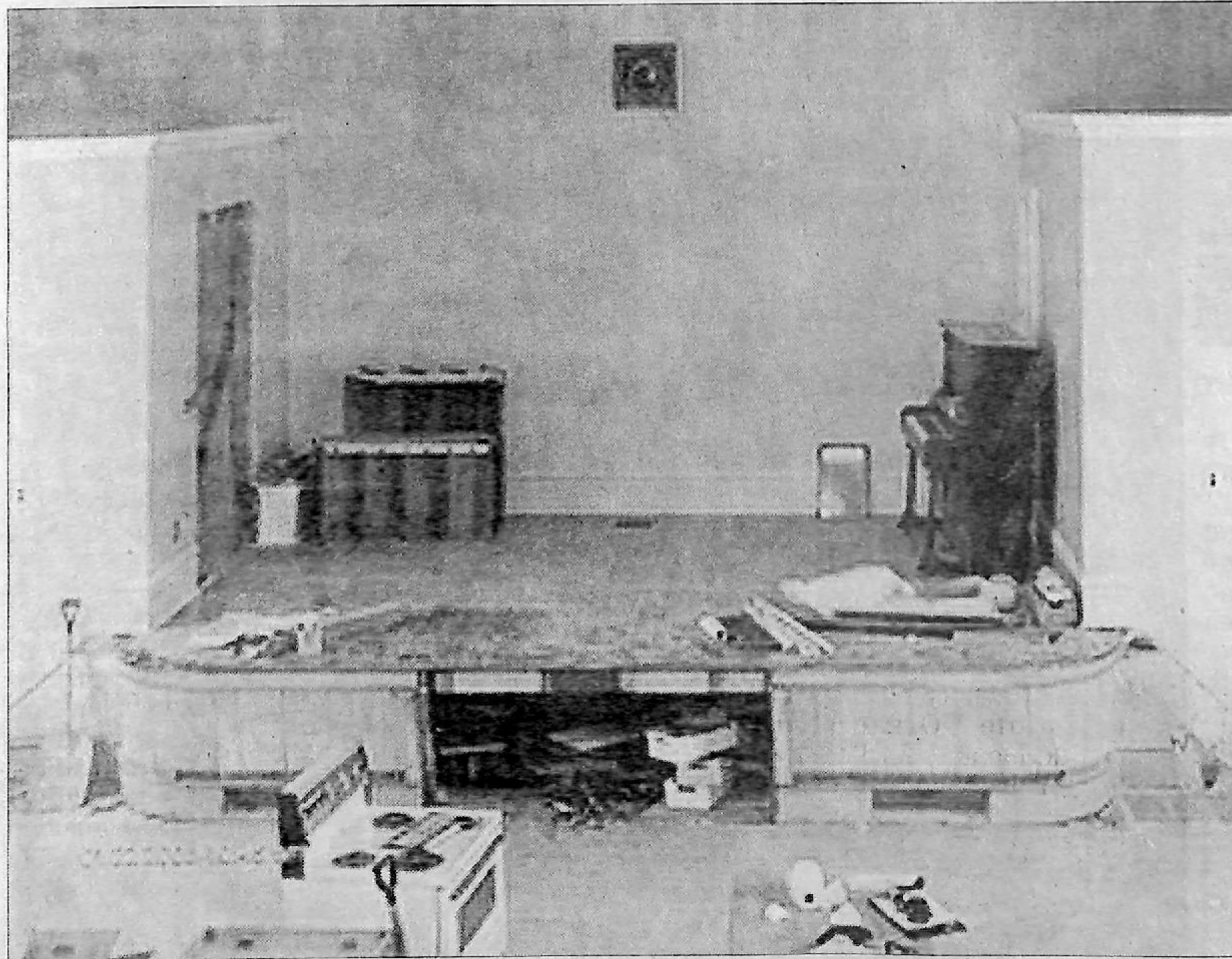
"What is really nice is the main entrance and vestibule are being completely restored," Ms. Moroz-Cornell notes.

"At one time, the north end was enclosed when they installed a kitchenette. All that has now been ripped out. The original landing and stairs will be restored so entry can be by either the north or south stairways — a symmetrical entryway."

The goal is to have all interior construction work completed by the end of May: "It's moving along pretty well now," Ms. Moroz-Cornell says.

Still to come are the exterior wheelchair ramps to provide access to the lower library and the upper theatre areas. The theatre ramp will be located at a door near the back of the stage. For the library level, the plan is to build a ramp using one of the large southern window spaces.

"We're very fortunate the hall wasn't totally gutted" over the past 100-plus years, Ms. Moroz-Cornell says. Instead, the architectural features were "mostly covered up", waiting for rediscovery and restoration.



March 2008: The original curved wooden front of the stage has been uncovered.

PHOTOS CONTRIBUTED

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