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Fossils in Silk: Historical Hoods of Trinity College, Toronto

By Colin Fleming

It is always exciting to uncover a previously unknown development in academical dress—a hitherto unknown document or evidence of a particular person’s influence in the design of a scheme. This article examines such a discovery: a variant of the full shape hood used by Trinity College, Toronto (Trinity College) for some part of the period between its foundation in 1851 and the mid-twentieth century.¹

In June 2018, the Burgon Society held a North American conference at Trinity College.² As part of that conference, the College Archivist provided some historical and contemporary items of academical dress, including official robes, doctoral robes, and several hoods. These were especially interesting, for many used a hybrid full-shape hood design that seems to incorporate aspects of several full-shape hoods of the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

The hoods used by Trinity College bear out to some extent what Groves and Christianson suggested, namely that ‘colonial universities initially borrowed their [academical dress] from the mother country, and particularly, in the case of British colonies, from the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge.’³ The hoods we saw at the conference provide evidence that Trinity College may represent an archaeological record of Canadian interpretations (or adaptations) of historical UK usage. The robes of the College have been described in various catalogues and other publications from 1875 to the present, and these sources provided valuable clues as to which degrees the hoods we saw represented.

In brief: the origins of Trinity College and its academical dress

Both the University of Toronto (1827/1843) and Trinity College (1851) owe their existence to John Strachan (1778–1867), a Scot who had studied at, but did not graduate from, both King’s College, Aberdeen, and St Andrews (where he took Divinity classes).⁴ Lack of funds to continue his university education drove him seek employment as a teacher, eventually leading him to what was then Upper Canada⁵ in late 1799. He was intensely interested in education, and promoted and participated in drafting the Common School Act (1816), which, with amendments in 1820 and 1824, remained the basis

1 I am grateful to Prof. Bruce Christianson, Dr Alex Kerr and Dr Nicholas Groves for their comments on the early draft of this article.

2 For a report of that conference see Fleming (2018).

3 Groves and Christianson (2004), p. 11.

4 He was subsequently awarded an honorary DD by Aberdeen in 1811.

5 Upper Canada included all of modern-day Southern Ontario and all those areas of Northern Ontario in the Pays d’en Haut which had formed part of New France, essentially the watersheds of the Ottawa River or Lakes Huron and Superior excluding any lands within the watershed of Hudson Bay (Wikipedia ‘Upper Canada’).

of Upper Canada's elementary (primary) school system until the 1840s. He also formed a friendship with James McGill (1744–1813), a fellow émigré Scot, which led to his being one of McGill's testamentary trustees. The will left the bulk of McGill's estate to the Royal Institution for the Advancement of Learning on condition that it found a college within ten years of his death. McGill College (now University) was established in Montréal in 1821, and Strachan can be considered one of its founders.

In 1827 he secured a Royal Charter for the University of King's College, York (as Toronto was then known). However, the Charter was suspended by the Upper Canada legislature, partly because of concerns about Church of England control over the University. The hiatus continued for seventeen years until the Charter was amended and allowed to come into force in 1842, and the University of King's College opened officially in June 1843. A change in government in 1848 in Upper Canada led to new legislation, passed in 1849, that completely secularized King's College and brought it under government control.⁶

In 1851, Strachan, by now Bishop of Toronto and undeterred by his experience with King's College, founded the University of Trinity College, as a Church of England institution. It was to teach students in Arts and Divinity and was located well away from King's College, on Queen Street West in the Bellwoods area of Toronto. In October 1904, after just over fifty years as an independent University, Trinity College became a federated college of the University of Toronto, retaining the right to award degrees in Theology, whilst transferring the teaching of undergraduates in Arts to the University of Toronto.⁷ In 1925 it moved location to its current site on Hoskin Avenue, closer to the other Colleges of the University of Toronto.

Academical dress at Trinity College has been required for students from its foundation, as Salisbury notes the 'prescriptive nature of the College regulations existed from the beginning: only members of Trinity [...] were required to wear cap and gown in the streets outside college grounds.' The use of academical dress continues and 'members of Trinity are expected to wear gowns in Hall on all nights of the week, in Chapel and at various College meetings.'⁸

Academical dress

Trinity College's academical dress has retained many of its original elements, although federation with the University of Toronto led to many of the degrees being discontinued. Wood (1875) describes the academical dress of the University of Toronto, but not that of Trinity College.⁹ Wood (1882/3) describes the Trinity College scheme, stating that 'The Gowns of this University are similar to those of Oxford, and the Hoods are nearly the same, velvet being substituted in some cases to distinguish them.'¹⁰ However and importantly for our purposes, the 1889 re-issue has 'Additions and Corrections' that includes a completely reworded scheme, stating that the 'gowns of this University are the same as those of Cambridge, and the shape of the various Hoods is identical with those of that University; but the colours are, for the most part, distinct, each faculty having its own colour, as follows:

6 G. M. Craig.

7 Salisbury (2007), p. 11.

8 Salisbury (2007), p. 21–22.

9 Wood (1875), p. 52.

10 Wood (1882/3), p. 23.

| | |
|-----------|--|
| BA | Black stuff, lined or trimmed with white fur |
| MA | Black silk, lined with crimson velvet |
| BD | Black silk, lined with black silk |
| DD | Scarlet cloth, lined with black silk |
| MB | Black silk, lined with light blue silk |
| CM | Brown silk, lined with light blue silk |
| MD | Scarlet cloth, lined with light blue silk |
| MD and CM | Scarlet cloth, lined with light blue silk, faced with brown silk two inches wide |
| BCL | Black silk, lined with slate coloured silk |
| DCL | Scarlet cloth, lined with slate coloured silk |
| MusB | Black silk, lined with violet silk |
| MusD | Scarlet cloth, lined with violet silk |
| LTh | Black stuff, edged with dark blue silk four inches wide ¹¹ |

Many of the hoods on display in 2018 reflect this scheme.

Federation with the University of Toronto in 1904, and the consequent transfer of Arts degrees to the University of Toronto, brought changes to the scope of degrees awarded by Trinity College: degrees in Medicine, Surgery, Law, and Music were no longer awarded. Trinity College's continued use of the full shape distinguished its awards from those of the University of Toronto, which uses the Oxford [s1] shape for its bachelors', masters' and some doctoral degrees. Haycraft (1927) describes the revised scheme thus:

| | |
|-----|--|
| LTh | Black stuff edged inside and outside round both tippet ¹² and cowl with dark blue silk 4 inches in width. <i>Full</i> |
| BD | Black silk lined with black silk. <i>Full</i> |
| DD | Scarlet cloth lined with black silk. <i>Full</i> ¹³ |

By 1948, Scobie Stringer noted that the DD hood was 'edged with white braid', which we should understand to be the distinctive Toronto *soutache* or Russian Cord,¹⁴ set 1.5 inches in from the edges of the cape and cowl.¹⁵ Curiously, Smith (1954) does not mention the white *soutache* on the DD, but does state that the BD hood has 'scarlet cord' (*soutache*) set 1.5 inches from the edge on the outside of the cape and cowl. Thus, it seems that the BD acquired its distinctive scarlet *soutache* between the late 1940s and the mid-1950s, most likely to distinguish it from the Cambridge award, which is otherwise the same.

By 1970, the scheme had expanded to include, in addition to the hoods described immediately above, the following:

| | |
|-----|--|
| STB | Black silk lined dark blue silk (<i>vide</i> the LTh, above). <i>Full</i> |
| MTh | Navy blue silk lined scarlet silk. <i>Full</i> |
| ThD | Scarlet cloth lined black silk. <i>Full</i> (i.e., the same as the DD) ¹⁶ |

11 Wood (1889), p. 37.

12 I.e., cape.

13 Haycraft (1927), p. 33. (The same text appears verbatim in Haycraft (1923), p. 34, and Haycraft (1924), p. 31. —ed.)

14 I am grateful to Charles Tsua for confirming this, after I provided a sample of *soutache* obtained from Harcourts Ltd. during a visit to Toronto in 2014.

15 Haycraft, revised Scobie Stringer (1948), p. 66.

16 Smith and Sheard (1970), p. 279.

By 2018, the BD was no longer awarded and is excluded from the current regulations.¹⁷

Full shape ... but which one(s)?

The late nineteenth-century regulations for Trinity College's academical dress described by Wood (1889) specify the use of the Cambridge/full shape hood. But how should we interpret this direction? By the 1880s, there were several distinct full shape hoods used at UK universities: Cambridge [f1], Dublin [f2], London [f3], Oxford [f5], various Durham awards [f4], [f6] and [f7], Edinburgh [f8], Glasgow [f9], and St Andrews [f10]. Any of these, but perhaps most especially the Oxford, Cambridge, London, and Scottish designs, might have made their way to Canada during the waves of immigration from Great Britain in the late 1800s. What did 'full shape' mean in practice to a tailor working far from Great Britain in the 1880s? We need perhaps to dig further to determine which was the most likely to have been used as the pattern.

When I made my presentation at the Burgon Society Congregation in October 2018, I suggested that the shape used for all the historical hoods was that described and illustrated in the *Girl's Own Paper* of 1880 (Fig. 2), and certainly we saw examples for which the *part-lining* was as illustrated. Subsequently, however, Groves (2021) highlighted an additional possibility, reproducing French's illustration of a Cambridge MA hood *circa* 1850 (Fig. 1), in which the cape is longer relative to the liripipe, and the lining is carried over the cape as a binding. However, Groves also cautioned that simply because one tailor used a particular shape, should not imply that all other robe-makers in Cambridge used the same shape.¹⁸ A faint possibility is the pattern offered for the Cambridge MA hood in Vincent's *Cutter's Practical Guide* (1898), although Groves thinks this shape is 'highly suspect' for a number of reasons.¹⁹ Other Cambridge derivations, Glasgow (Fig. 3), St Andrews (Fig. 4), and London (Fig. 5), and all have a cape that is longer than the liripipe. In addition, Smith and Sheard's illustration of the McGill bachelors' and masters' hood shape as having the cape slightly longer than the liripipe.²⁰

The historical hoods that were on display were (with one exception) of a similar design, which appears to combine elements of several of the shapes offered for consideration, but without conforming to any of them exactly. A plausible conjecture is that the origin is the London shape but with a longer cape, the cowl and notch cut similar to that illustrated in the *Girl's Own Paper* (the notch is also similar to Glasgow), without following any of them exactly, blended together with some tailor's whimsey. The result an elegant shape and what might be described as the 'Trinity Toronto' shape (Fig. 6).

The current College regulations state that (other than the DSLitt,²¹ which uses the Burgon [s2] shape²²) 'the shape of the hood shall be in each case as is in use in the

17 See Appendix B for the current (2021) scheme. This is the same as in 1970, save for the addition of the DMin and the elimination of the BD.

18 Private correspondence, January 2022. This profusion of patterns and styles was also noted by London University's Report of the Committee on University Costume (1861). See Christianson (2021) fn. 92 (p. 141).

19 Ibid.

20 Smith and Sheard (1970), Plate 51, p. 191.

21 Doctor of Sacred Letters.

22 A review of recent convocation reports indicates that the DSLitt is awarded for distin-



Fig. 1. Cambridge MA hood as illustrated in French (1850).

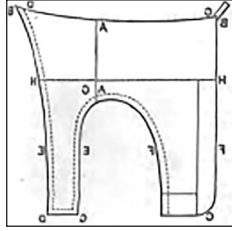


Fig. 2. Cambridge MA hood as illustrated in the *Girl's Own Paper* (1880) (reversed). The part-lining is indicated by the solid lines.

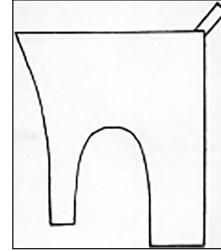


Fig 3. Glasgow full shape (Haycraft 1947).

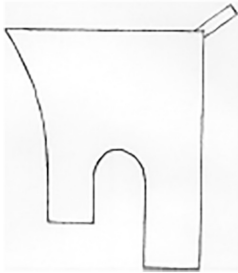


Fig. 4. St Andrews full shape (Haycraft 1947).

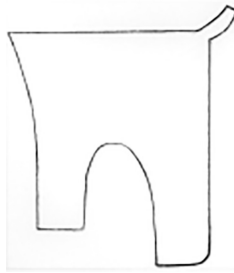


Fig. 5. London full shape (Haycraft 1947).



Fig. 6. 'Trinity Toronto' shape, taken from the DCL.

University of Cambridge' (see Appendix B), an instruction that is at once clear and ambiguous, given the vicissitudes of robemakers' practices. More to the point, this means that the Trinity Toronto shape is now, itself, a fossil.

Historical academical dress

There were several items of historical academical dress on display. All had labels as to the award/degree, but further examination has, as will be seen, called their attribution into question. Almost all of the items were more readily identified as items of Trinity College academical dress (e.g., because they corresponded with Wood (1889) or Haycraft), whilst one might not be a Trinity Toronto award at all.

guished service in fields other than Theology and Ministry, which may account for the difference in shape.

Hoods readily identified as examples of Trinity College academical dress



Fig. 7. Bachelor of Divinity (i).

This hood is of the Trinity Toronto shape, black ribbed silk, fully lined with black satin silk.

The label states that this hood is an MA, but it conforms to the description in Wood (1889) of the BD and those in the 1927 and 1948 editions of Haycraft. There is no soutache.



Figs 8, 9. Bachelor of Divinity (ii).

The hood is a modified Trinity Toronto shape (the notch quite wide and square), in black ribbed silk fully lined with black silk, as above, but with the addition of purple soutache set 1.5 inches in around cape and cowl.

This could be an iteration in the BD's design, with the purple soutache being replaced by scarlet between the 1948 edition of Haycraft and Smith (1954).

In any event, it is (with its near twin, in Fig. 7) a dignified hood.



Figs 10, 11. Licentiate in Theology.

This hood is of the Trinity Toronto shape, black cloth, the cowl and cape bound inside and out 4 inches dark blue silk.

The label in this item describes the hood as a MMus but this must be erroneous as no Trinity College scheme includes a MMus. The hood conforms to the description of the LTh in Wood (1889) and Haycraft (1927).

The contemporary LTh/BTh hood is the same as this, but with the post-1934 Cambridge-cut cape (see Appendix B).



Figs 12, 13. Doctor of Civil Law.

This was one of the few items with irrefutable attribution. The hood is identified by a label sewn in the neckband to 'D. J. Goggin, D.C.L., Trinity College Toronto [Class of 1900], Chairman of Convocation 1908 to 1921.' Goggin was Superintendent of Education in the North-West Territories and the author of *Elementary English Grammar for Use in Canadian Schools* (Toronto: W. J. Gage, 1908).

The hood is of the Trinity College shape, scarlet cloth, fully lined with slate silk The hood is consistent with the description provided by Wood (1889).



Figs 14, 15. MD CM.

This hood is of the Trinity Toronto shape, in scarlet fully lined light blue silk, bound 2 inches on all edges with [light] brown silk.

This hood is consistent with the description in Wood (1889). After Trinity's federation with Toronto, it ceased to award degrees in Medicine (and Surgery), so it must date from prior to 1905.



Figs 16, 17. Doctor of Music.

This hood conforms to the description in Wood (1889), scarlet cloth lined with violet silk.

However, the hood does not use the Trinity Toronto shape: the shape is closer to the Oxford doctors' shape illustrated in Haycraft (1948), p. 145, except that the cowl is cut straight and not concave, but does have the additional triangle to enable flourishing.



A Curiosity

There was one hood on display that did not conform to anything identified by Wood, Haycraft or Smith as being a Trinity College award.

Fig. 18. Senior Doctor.

This hood is probably an Oxford DCL/DM, scarlet cloth lined with crimson silk.

The label described the hood as a 'Senior Doctor'. There was no further information on this item. I suspect it may be a Canadian-made Oxford award that found its way into the archive via a member of the College before eBay was invented.



Figs 19, 20. Bachelor of Arts.

This University of Toronto hood is as described by Wood (1875). It is simple shape [s1], black cloth, the cowl bound with white fur. White soutache is laid 1.5 inches from the edge on both the inside and outside of the cowl. Note that, like the Oxford [s1] BA hood, only the cowl is bound with fur.

Current and historical robes

The College Archivist also provided three officers' robes, the currently in-use Chancellor's and Provost and Vice-Chancellor's robes, and a 'retired' Chancellor's robe.

The Chancellor

Smith and Sheard describe the Chancellor's robe as 'made from black silk and having a train. The gown has facings, down each side in front, and a square collar at the back, of the same material. The gown is trimmed with gold lace and ornaments after the manner of the Oxford University Chancellor's gown.'

This robe is no longer in use but has been preserved in the Trinity College Archives and is very much as described. It is of black Tudor Rose damask with gold oak leaf lace on the facings and flap collar and sleeve slits, together with gold lace and wire ornaments. These ornaments the traditional style, with lozenges and floral patterns. The robe was not fully removed from its archival box, so it was not possible to determine whether the train was still there, or whether it had been removed between 1970 and the robe's retirement.

The contemporary Chancellor's robe was made by Harcourts Ltd. of Toronto, well established suppliers of academical, ecclesiastical, legal, and judicial robes. The robe is a traditional lay gown with panel sleeves, a flap collar and T arm slits (not inverted). It is of plain corded black silk with the facings, skirt and flap collar edged with a double row of four-centimetre-wide gold galloon lace, incorporating crosses, grapes, and oak leaves. The arms and sleeve panels are embellished with six simplified ornaments (similar to those on a verger's or clerk's gown, without the tassels) of the same lace, one above the arm hole, two divided around each arm hole and four below. The shoulders are embellished with one-centimetre gold lace. The robe does not have a train.

The Provost and Vice-Chancellor

In Strachan Hall, Trinity College's refectory, there is a portrait of the Revd George Whitaker, a member of Queens' College, Cambridge and the first Provost of the University of Trinity College (1851–80). He is wearing robes that might be described as similar to those of a High Court judge, but in black as opposed to scarlet: the cuffs and the cape and hood are lined with white fur.²³ The amount of material evident suggests that the robe might also have a train. Whether this was the original Provost's robe is not clear, nor (if it is) why Whitaker adopted it. If it was the Provost's robe, it eventually fell into disuse, as it is not mentioned in Smith (1970).

However, there is now a robe and it is, if anything, grander than the Chancellor's. It is of the same style as the Chancellor's robe but made of black Truro damask. The flap collar, outer edges of the front facings, bottoms of the sleeve panels and the bottom hem are trimmed with five-centimetre gold galloon lace. The shoulders are embellished with one-centimetre gold lace. The upper sleeves have three frogs made of the same lace as the facings, the lower two divided to accommodate the inverted-T slits for the arms.

²³ Hargreaves-Mawdsley (1963) noted that from 1635 judges 'in the courts of Westminster were to wear black or violet gowns "as they prefer" together with a hood of the same colour ... with facings of miniver' (from October to Ascension Day), pp.60-61. I am grateful to Dr Alex Kerr, FBS, for suggesting the possible origin of this robe.

Officers' robes

Chancellor (historic)



Fig. 21. Front of the robe, with facings, and flap collar, and heavy lace.



Fig. 22. Lower sleeve embellishments.

Chancellor (current)



Fig. 24. Flap collar (note where a new spool of tape starts).



Fig. 25. Facings covered with a double row of gold galloon lace, T armhole trimmed with further sleeve ornamentation.

Provost and Vice-Chancellor (current)



Fig. 26. Front and panel sleeves, trimmed arm slits.



Fig. 27. Centre back ornament and trimmed hem of the robe.

The sleeve panels have three triangular devices in gold (an obvious allusion to the Holy Trinity), with an additional device at the centre of the back of the robe, near the bottom of the robe. It is, one might say, a 'beautiful and dignified' garment.

Concluding observations

This article had its genesis in a short presentation I gave to the Society at Congregation in October 2018. Returning to my notes and photographs in late 2021 (retrieved after a disk crash at the beginning of the UK Covid-19 lockdown) I did not expect much in the way of excitement. However, Dr Groves' article in *Burgon Notes*, 55, a far more rigorous interrogation of historical sources and articles in *Transactions of the Burgon Society*, and the discovery of the 'Additions and Corrections' in Wood (1889) led to a significant reappraisal of what I thought we had seen. (For me, this is the essence of the Burgon Society's work: re-assessing historical understandings of academical dress through considering newly discovered historical records and available physical evidence.)

This reappraisal has caused me to suggest that the hoods we saw represented not only examples of Trinity College's pre-federation academic dress, but also a more complex full-shape fossil. The physical evidence provided by the hoods in Trinity College's collection is compelling. The shape combines the familiar pre-1930s Cambridge MA shape for cowl and notch together with the part-lining (*Girl's Own Paper*) carried over the edge of the cape as a binding with a longer cape with rounded corners, which may have been influenced by the London (masters') full shape, and there is an additional (unidentified) flourish in the cutting of the cape and liripipe. Yet, in spite of this slightly mongrel antecedence, the resulting Trinity Toronto shape emerges as a distinctive and attractive, if short-lived expression of the full-shape hood. Having seen it in the silk, folded and hanging, it is an elegant addition to the historical expressions of the full shape, and its loss regretted.

Appendix A

*The Trinity College scheme as (erroneously) described in Wood (1882/3)*²⁴

The Gowns of this University are similar to those of Oxford, and the Hoods are nearly the same, velvet being substituted in some cases to distinguish them.

- BA Black stuff, edged with white fur
- MA Black silk, lined with crimson velvet*
- BCL Black silk, lined with French grey silk†
- DCL Scarlet cloth, lined with French grey silk†
- MB Blue silk, lined with white silk*
- MD Scarlet cloth lined with white silk†
- BD Black silk, lined with violet silk†
- DD Scarlet cloth, lined with pink velvet

* Follows the Oxford scheme, with the substitution of velvet for silk (MA) or silk for fur (MB).

† Does not follow the Oxford scheme: the DD follows Cambridge, substituting velvet for silk.

²⁴ Wood (1882/3), p. 23.

Appendix B

Trinity College

*Faculty of Divinity, Regulations for Academic Dress (as amended 2017)*²⁵

Hoods

The following shall be the Hoods prescribed for the Licentiate and degrees:

| | |
|------------|--|
| LTh/ BTh | black stuff edged with dark blue silk four inches wide |
| MDiv | black silk, lined with blue silk |
| MTS | black silk with two-inch dark blue silk inner border |
| MTh | navy blue silk, lined with scarlet silk |
| DMin | scarlet cloth, unlined, with a two inch outside border of black silk |
| DD/ThD/PhD | scarlet cloth, lined with black silk ²⁶ |
| DSLitt | scarlet cloth, lined with scarlet silk, with a two inch border of black silk on top inside edge, extending one-half inch over outside edge |

The shape of the hood shall be in each case as is in use in the University of Cambridge, with the exception of the DSLitt hood, which shall be the Oxford Burgon shape.

Ceremonial Gowns

The following shall be the ceremonial gowns prescribed for doctoral degrees:

DMin Cambridge doctoral shape, in scarlet wool, with front facing scarlet wool; sleeves of scarlet wool, unlined with black taffeta border inside and outside; sleeves looped with red cord and a black button.

DD/ ThD Cambridge doctoral shape,²⁷ in scarlet wool, with front facing black silk, lined with black silk, and turned back to form cuff with black cord and a black button. Chimere in scarlet wool, lined with black silk; black buttons.²⁸

DSLitt Cambridge doctoral shape, in scarlet wool, with front facing red silk with border of black silk on outside edge of panels; lined with red silk and turned back to form cuff with red braid [cord] and a black button.

PhD Oxford doctoral shape, in black silk, with front facing scarlet wool edged with white taffeta on the outer edge; sleeve cuffs of scarlet wool; with pocket slits, as in the University of Toronto.

Regulations Concerning Diplomas, Licentiate and Degrees

September 2017

²⁵ Statutes and Certain Regulations of Trinity College and St Hilda's College and Historical Documents, Part G, Regulations: Regulations for the Faculty of Divinity — Regulations Concerning Diplomas, Licentiate and Degrees, Parts V, Hoods, and VI, Ceremonial Gowns, at <www.trinity.utoronto.ca/discover/about/who-we-are/statutes> [retrieved 11 July 2021].

²⁶ Note that there is no soutache, reverting to the design described in Haycraft (1927) and/or Smith (1970).

²⁷ Photographs of Trinity College convocations indicate that the Oxford DD robe is used in practice for the DD *honoris causa*; the ThD uses a Cambridge robe (see, for example, the second photo at <www.trinity.utoronto.ca/discover/news/item/congratulations-to-the-faculty-of-divinity-class-of-2019/> [retrieved 22 June 2022]).

²⁸ What is described here is the Oxford University DD convocation habit. The convocation habit is similar in design to the chimere—part of the choir dress of an Anglican bishop—but the chimere is worn open, whilst the Convocation Habit is closed by the buttons.

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