Culver Historical Highlights

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Spring 2008

THE CC HISTORICAL SOCIETY SALUTES MAY AS HISTORIC PRESERVATION MONTH WITH AN OPEN HOUSE

CITY HALL ROOMS: NAMING OPPORTUNITIES

by Julie Lugo Cerra

At the request of the city, the Society historical input offered suggestions for the naming of rooms in City Hall. Our report broadened background information to show other historical namings in the city (streets, parks, etc.).

"THE ARMSTRONG ROOM"

On Monday, March 10, the City Council discussed the issue and took one of our suggestions. On a motion made by Steve Rose, seconded by Carol Gross, the Council voted unanimously to name a conference room on the main floor of City Hall the "Armstrong Room."

The room is named for legendary trumpeter and worldwide ambassador of music, Louis Armstrong, who played at Frank Sebastian's Cotton Club and who gave Lionel Hampton his start there. The room will display photos of Louis Armstrong, whose house on Wade Street carries city landmark status.

This is your CC Historical Society at work!

KICK-OFF FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION MONTH

Come celebrate "History" with the CC Historical Society as we kick off the annual "Historic Preservation Month" of May. historic preservation salutes all the wonderful work being done locally and nationally to keep our multi-heritages alive and in good form

Once again, the community for future generations.

The Society invites you to stop by the Culver Hotel on Friday, May 2, 2008, after 5 pm, after work to visit with other historic folks. Eniov chatting about old times in the wonderful Culver City landmark at the no-host bar - and the Society will be

> chatting you up on what's happening at the new CCHS Archives & Research Center (ARC). Plans are being made for themed displays, events and a whole host of activities for volunteers to become involved

MAY 10 WALKING TOURS

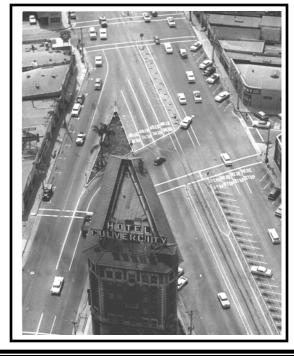
The following week, the Society will offer free walking tours in Downtown Culver City on Saturday, May 10, the morning of the annual Car Show. Tour guides will meet

(cont'd. pg.7)

CULVER CITY's

DOWNTOWN "CROSSROADS"

A vintage look westward with Washington Blvd. (L) merging with Culver Blvd. (R) with the "Hotel Culver City" in the



~ APRIL 16TH GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING ~

Special Guest: Leith Adams will speak on "The Art of Archiving"

f The Culver City Historical Society's Spring General Membership Meeting will be held on Wednesday, April 16^{6h} at 7:00 pm in the Multi-Purpose Room at the Veterans Memorial Building, 4117 Overland Avenue. Please park and enter from the rear of the building, and a brief tour of the new CCHS ARC will be offered following the meeting.

An informative program will be presented by our guest speaker, Leith Adams, who is the Chief Archivist for Warner Bros. Studios. Mr. Adams will share his experiences in the field of preservation and archiving, notably of film posters which is especially germane to our growing collection of film memorabilia. We are lucky to have Mr. Adams who continues the dialogue we started with Sony archivist Colin Greene, who gave the Archives committee a "Triage Workshop" recently to help guide our set-up.

The public is invited to enjoy the free program and students are encouraged to attend. Refreshments will be served For more information, please call the Society at (310) 253-6941 or email us at following the program. info@CulverCityHistoricalSociety.org

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

by Stu Freeman



Hello!

With my first official "President's Message," I would like to begin by thanking everyone who made the January 16th Installation such a wonderful success — and it was great to see so many members (over 80!) and *soon-to-be* members come out to show their support. It was very gratifying.

I'd especially like to thank the two Co-Chairs, Julie Lugo Cerra and Judy Stangler, along with both the outgoing Board and the incoming Board and

Chairs for making it such a smooth event - and to Akasha Restaurant for the fabulous catering job and wonderful service everyone commented on.

As we move forward with the renovation of the long-awaited CC Historical Society's Archives and Research Center (ARC), I want to thank two of our local businesses for their generous contributions:

- Cy's Drapery Service has contributed and installed the needed vertical blinds for the ARC's work area which will allow added protection from harmful light to our many treasures.
- Alpine Carpet has donated carpet specifically to enhance the ARC's display area.

We encourage everyone to support these wonderful companies as well as all of our Business Members (see pg. 8).

I pledge to continue the membership growth that my predecessor, Cathy Zermeno, oversaw, and encourage all of our current members to renew your memberships if you haven't already.

And I set forth a "challenge" to everyone to bring in at least one new member this year — or as many as you can!

Sincerely,

Notes from Your City Historian

by Julie Lugo Cerra

CULVER BUS LINE:

purchased our own.

STATE'S 2ND OLDEST



line in the state, Culver City has a fleet of pretty *green* (in many ways!) buses.

Why is the Culver CityBus logo so recognizable? The fonts/script came from the lettering on the tower and neon of the 1947 Culver Theatre.

80 YEARS OF SERVICE!

As of March 3, 2008, Culver City has provided 80 years of continuous bus service to its citizens – and to celebrate, on its anniversary the city offered "Culver CityBus Free Fare Day!"

Today, Culver CityBus boards approximately 5.8 million passengers each year, for safe rides on its fleet of compressed natural gas (CNG) buses.

Now, the second oldest municipal bus

In 1928, Mayor Reve Houck headed

the trustees who rented buses to serve

Culver City's transportation needs.

After a bond issue passed,



Culber Historical Highlights

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The Culver City Historical Society, founded in 1980, is a non-profit membership organization created for the purpose of collecting, preserving and exhibiting the history of Culver City and its cultural and civic accomplishments.

The CCHS Newsletter is published	l quarterly.
Editor & Publisher	Judy Stangler
Contributing Writers	Julie Lugo Cerra
Marc Wanamal	ker, Steve Newtor
Printed by	Mr. Printer

Officers and Committee Chairs

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Stu Freeman	President
Cathy Zermeno	Immediate Past President
Fred Yglesias	VP, Programs
Martha & Sol Sigall	VP, Archives
Doug Newton	VP, Ways & Means
Jeanne Conklin	Secretary
	Treasurer
Karen Coyle	Parliamentarian
Lydia Spiegelman	Membership
Joy Jacobs	Public Relations
Judy Stangler	Newsletter
Julie Lugo Cerra	Historic Sites
Steven J. Rose	Government Liaison
Louise Coffey-Webb	Costumes

Editor's Column

What a way to begin the year – with a fabulous Installation at a great new restaurant in an historic Culver City building!

The January 16th Installation was filled with members and their guests, all having a swell time – and none more than the new Board and Chairmen!

Stu Freeman became the Society's 11th President and it was an especial treat to have the event at the Hull Building which has been in Stu's family for three generations!

The ARC is coming along wonderfully and we hope you'll all attend the April 16th Spring General Meeting as you'll have the opportunity to see how much has been done to date – you'll be impressed, I'm sure.

For the Summer newsletter, we're working on a story about the CC Girls Softball League which may have started as early as 1946! I welcome anyone with memories, photos, etc. to send them to us.

Remember, it's YOUR Historical Society—we can't succeed without YOU!

Photo: The 1928 Municipal Depot with Mayor Reve Houck standing (center) in front of an early bus.

"LA HERITAGE DAY"

The Historical Society had a prominent presence at this year's "LA Heritage Day" on March 2nd at the Heritage Square located off the Pasadena (#110) Freeway, along with Historical Societies and Museums from all over (cont'd. pg. 7)

REEL COLVER CITY

by Marc Wanamaker

THE PLANTATION CAFÉ OF CULVER CITY

Dan Coombs, one of Culver City's first mayors and a prominent Culver City businessman, was instrumental in the construction of the Cotton Club near National Boulevard. He was then asked to re-open the Plantation Club near the MGM Studios on Washington Boulevard.

The first Plantation Café was opened in 1926 and had a southern plantation style building with an electric sign on the roof and a hedge-sculpture saying *Plantation Café* behind a white picket fence. (At the time, the Sonny Clays Band was headlining in one of the several nightclubrestaurants that would dominate Washington Boulevard in the 1920s.)

ROSCOE "FATTY" ARBUCKLE COMES ONBOARD

Sometime around 1927, there was a fire at the Club and it closed. It wasn't until early 1928 that Coombs and others began to consider re-opening the club. By August of that year, famed comedian Roscoe ("Fatty") Arbuckle was brought in as a final investor with his celebrity status as a selling point for the club's advertising.

The new club opened as Roscoe Arbuckle's Plantation Café on August 2, 1928. Mr. Coombs remodeled the building's interior to Arbuckle's specifications and the work was carried out in 28 days.

MGM Art Department head, Cedric Gibbons, (who met Arbuckle when he was directing Marion Davies in *The Red Mill*) did the interior decoration, which was described as stretches of painted canvas suspended from the ceiling and strung with electric lights like stars similar to the interior of the Cotton Club.

OPENING NIGHT FILLED WITH STARS

On opening night, Hollywood star Lew Cody acted as Master of Ceremonies and praised Roscoe, saying "Roscoe "Fatty" Arbuckle was the funniest man in America." Tom Mix, dressed in his cowboy gear, took over the Red Nichols Band with his cohorts.



Roscoe's best friend, Buster Keaton, did a comedy bit as did Mary Pickford and Douglas Fairbanks. Others who also did bits included Charles Chaplin, Harry Langdon, Larry Semon, Ruth Roland, Marshal Neilan, Bebe Daniels and the three Talmadge sisters. Roscoe's old friend Mabel Normand gave Roscoe a lifesized model of "Fatty" made of flowers!

Leatrice Joy gave Roscoe a plaque that read "We owe Mr. Arbuckle a debt of gratitude. He has shown the miracle of patience without bitterness in a world of injustice." Roscoe came onto the stage to accept and cried with appreciation. He took a deep breath and then went into his



comic routine.

In the following months, the film industry, led by friends Leatice Joy and Ruth Roland, performed at the club insuring its success. An advertisement for the Plantation Café announced: "Where the stars come out • Sunday night. • See all the stars of stage and screen. • Leatrice Joy, guest of honor, leads the dance contest for a magnificent trophy. • Henry Halstead and his recording orchestra. • It's the talk of the town."

Some of the stars that performed at the Plantation included Al Jolson (who sang

thirty songs in one evening!). Even Warner Bros. head Jack Warner sang with Jolson that evening. Warner star John Barrymore went on stage with thirteen-year-old Jackie Coogan and performed an act as well.

A HOLLYWOOD MEETING PLACE

The Plantation Café became a 'Hollywood' meeting place for the next couple of years. Arbuckle would amble up on the stage and would stamp his foot to get attention and began his comedy routine. He usually started with saying: "I met a girl on a train. She asked me, 'Excuse me, are you Mr. Arbuckle? I said to her, 'Why yes I am'. She said, 'Can you tell me how to get into the movies?' Pardon ME young lady, but can you tell ME how to get into the movies!"

The Stock Market crashed in late 1929 and by 1930, Arbuckle sold his interest in the Plantation Café and the café then became known as George Olsen's Plantation Café. Nine years later, the old Plantation Café became The Plantation Trailer Court and about six years later, it became a place of entertainment again being named, Foreman Phillips County Barn Dance.

By the 1960s the place had disappeared – into a fascinating part of the history of Culver City.

CCHS member Marc Wanamaker is a past VP, Museum and owns Bison Archives.

GIVE THE GIFT OF HISTORY!

Consider giving a Culver City Historical Society membership as a gift ~ birthdays, holidays, anniversaries, any occasion!

CULVER CITY HISTORICAL SOCIETY ~~~

A NEW YEAR AND A NEW PRESIDENT

2008 began with a celebration of the Culver City Historical Society at its January 16th Installation of new officers.

Stu Freeman became the Society's 11th President and commenced his two-year term with a festive dinner-installation joined by Fred Yglesias, (VP, Programs), Martha & Sol Sigall (co-VPs, Archives), Doug Newton (VP, Ways & Means), Jeanne Conklin (Secretary), Tami Eskridge (Treasurer) and Cathy Zermeno (Immediate Past President).

Co-Chairs, Julie Lugo Cerra and Judy Stangler definitely had a good time while overseeing a smooth hand-over from the outgoing Board to the incoming Board. It was a packed house of over 80 members and guests!



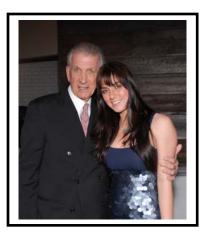
Outgoing President Cathy Zermeno presents new President Stu Freeman with the key to the ARC.

President Stu Freeman with his beautiful daughter Jennifer, the 4th generation of Freemans.

Photos by Kevin Lachoff.



(L-R) New CC Historical Society Board: Tami Eskridge, Cathy Zermeno, Jeanne Conklin, Doug Newton, Sol Sigall, Martha Sigall, Fred Yglesias and Stu Freeman with Co-Chair Judy Stangler.



Carlos Lugo and sister, Julie Lugo Cerra.



(L-R) Co-Chairs Judy Stangler & Julie Lugo Cerra.



Sol & Martha Sigall, new co-VPS, Archives.



~ ~ ~ CELEBRATING MORE THAN 27 YEARS!"

... AND A NEW BOARD AT THE JANUARY 16TH INSTALLATION





A very good time was had by all! More than 80 CCHS members and guests celebrated the Installation of the new CCHS Board.



Looks like it's going to be a fun year ahead! (L-R) Jeanne Conklin, Doug Newton, Judy Stangler (passing out Board packets), Sol Sigall, Martha Sigall, Fred Yglesias and new President Stu Freeman.



(L-R) Michele Cerra Lachoff, Cathy Zermeno & Carlos Lugo with Chris Machado (seated).



(Photo at left) Isn't that Bryan & Pat Bumpas helping themselves to the goodies at the delicious buffet spread that Akasha Restaurant catered?! A new, and highly-praised restaurant and bakery that has opened in the historic Hull Building.







Steve Rose ("gift-wrapped!")

NEWS FROM THE COSTUME CHAIR . . .

by Louise Coffey-Webb Costume Committee Chair

ANOTHER MGM COSTUME IDENTIFIED: #1608!

Currently on display in the ARC is a navy blue Renaissance-style costume from the original MGM cache belonging to the City, but now curated by the Historical Society (see photo). Until now, the only information available was what was written in the garment itself: "Helen Wood" and a number "1608."

Now comes the fun part - the research! I called up my friend Marc Wanamaker (who authors the column "Reel Culver City" on pg. 3), who is the last word in film studio history. I gave him the number, 1608, which he recognized as an MGM production number. He looked it up and found that it was the film Give a Girl a Break from 1953.

Then I hopped on my computer to look at the wonderful film-buff website www.imdb.com to confirm that Helen Wood was indeed in that film. There I found that the character she played was Joanna Moss, and that the costume was designed by the great Helen Rose.

THE FILM'S DIRECTOR -STANLEY DONEN

Another interesting fact for me was that the director was Stanley Donen. I was Stanley's personal assistant back in the early 1980s when he lived in Bel Air. His wife at the time was the lovely Yvette Mimieux, and she had had a starring role in another MGM film, The Wonderful World of the Brothers' Grimm - a costume from which had also come up for auction a the famous 1970 MGM auction. That particular film won a costume Oscar© for Mary Wills in 1962, and one of those Renaissance-style costumes now resides in the collection at Woodbury University.

DISPLAYS TO BE ROTATED

At the ARC we plan to rotate costume displays because too much light can permanently weaken fibers and cause unseen as well as visible

damage. I plan to research each costume so that we can provide an accurate label, and this way we can all keep learning more about the wonderful holdings we have.



Costume labeled "Helen Wood, #1608." Research found that it was worn by actress Helen Wood and designed by the legendary Helen Rose.

On a personal note: I am extremely delighted to announce that I will become the new Chair of Fashion Design at Woodbury University beginning this coming July. This is a very exciting position for me, but means that I will now need to find someone to fill my old position to manage the Woodbury's wonderful study collection - a job I will sadly relinquish due to time constraints.

~ LC-W

"WELCOME" то

OUR NEW MEMBERS

- Jean Barker
- Marti Connelly, Remax **Westside Property**
- Dr. Dean Gebroe & family
- **Carole Gustin**
- The Carlos Lugo Family
- **Andrea & Sandy Nitz**
- **Hope Parrish**
- **Paul Pitti**
- **Kim Richards**
- **Robbin & Sharon Smith**
- Sandra Wager & family
- **Bernie & Ruth Waldow**

and welcome back. Mary Ellen Fernandez

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

APRIL 8TH: DON'T FORGET TO VOTE!

APRIL 16TH: CCHS SPRING

GENERAL MEETING

MAY 2ND: HISTORIC PRESERVATION

OPEN HOUSE AT CULVER HOTEL

MAY 10TH: CCHS WALKING TOURS

OF DOWNTOWN CC

May 10TH : CC HIGH SCHOOL

ALUMNI ANNUAL **DINNER-DANCE**

JULY 16TH: CCHS SUMMER

GENERAL MEETING &

"PICNIC"

Ост. 15тн: CCHS FALL

GENERAL MEETING

At the April 16th General NOTE: Meeting, the Board will offer an amendment to the Standing Rules to "Honorary include а one-year Membership" category to be awarded to individuals/organizations through a vote of the Board."

A Reminder:

TIME TO RENEW CCHS MEMBERSHIPS!

by Lydia Spiegelmans, Membership Chair

As you know the CCHS Membership renewals are due at the beginning of the year, but it isn't too late to send in your new memberships and renewals. This is a great Historical Society and we want you all to be a part of it! As a Culver City native myself and your new Membership Chairman, I am so happy to be part of this special organization.

Your membership dues support the Society's diverse efforts to keep Culver City's wonderful history alive for future generations. This is a very exciting year with our new Archives & Resource Center (ARC) finally in operation. You will also be supporting such community outreach programs as the very popular "Living History Project" for Culver City students. A fun year ahead!

With all that's happening, this is the time to renew your memberships and encourage family and friends to become members as well. Please consider becoming a Patron, a Lifetime Member, a Corporate Sponsor or a Benefactor. Being a member of the Culver City Historical Society is more important and rewarding than ever before. (see form on pg. 8.)

"Kick-Off" (cont'd)

you at the corner of Duquesne Ave. and Culver Blvd. and walk you to several historic destinations in and around downtown.

There will be two tours, one starting at 10 am and one at 11 am. There is much to learn about our city you may even run into Harry Culver, giving his vision for Culver City and its future or meet a third generation CC property owner or learn who ran a contest to rename Culver City or

The city will be a bustle of activity – come visit the Car Show and pick up some fascinating trivia about historic Culver City (remember, *Jeopardy* is filmed at Sony Pictures Entertainment – who knows how much you may learn?!)

Be there or be square!!!

* * *

Ed. Note: For more information on local historic preservation events, go to

PreserveLA.com – calendar of events at:

http://preservela.com/index.php?option=com_gi gcal&Itemid=45

CALENDAR NOTE

The LA City Historical Society sponsors "The Marie Northrop Lecture Series" on Sundays at the LA Public Library. This year's theme is "Treasures of LA."

Sunday, May 18: Merry Ovnick will speak on the "Architecture of L.A."

Sunday, July 13: Hynda Rudd will speak on the "LA City Archives."

Sunday, Oct. 19: Geraldine Knatz on the history of the San Pedro Harbor.

Parking is free on Sundays after 1pm and the lectures begin at 2pm. For more information:

http://www.lacityhistory.org

"Notes" (cont'd)

Southern California who presented information on their communities and Los Angeles' Heritage. This special event was the first time LA's diverse historical communities were brought together to preserve and share the past.

Special kudos go to our new Parliamentarian, Karen Coyle, who went among the crowds and brought many over to the CCHS table – she was a great Society rep.!

Mary Culver, a family member of the Harry Culver clan stopped by our table and we hope to have a chance to learn more about her and her background for the next newsletter issue.

The Heritage Square Museum is a living history museum reflecting the settlement and development of Southern California from the Civil War to the early 20th Century. Heritage Square Museum offers visitors a look into the everyday lives of Southern Californians at the close of the 19th Century. For more information: http://www.heritagesquare.org



"LA Heritage Day" at Heritage Square, March 2, 2008. (L-R) Karen Coyle and Julie Lugo Cerra helped Fred Yglesias(R) sell CCHS items at our booth!

Next month, President Stu Freeman and I will be meeting with the Historical Preservation sub-committee of the CC Cultural Affairs Commission to further strengthen our ties and work together to continue the preserving Culver City's unique history.

An ARC Update

by Martha & Sol Sigall Vice President, Archives

WE'RE ON OUR WAY!

It will be our goal to continue the impressive progress that Robin Turner made during her term as Vice President, Archives. She and her committee accomplished so much – we want to keep the momentum going!

We especially appreciate Cathy Zermeno, our past President, who, as soon as it was possible, opened up the ARC each week and worked tirelessly to catalogue so much of the historic items.

Our thanks to many of our members who have already signed up to volunteer on the Archives Committee. We will be calling on you for your help very soon, and establish specific days and times the ARC will be open for the work of cataloging, labeling, etc.

A special thank-you to Louise Coffey-Webb, our Costumes Chair, and her wonderful intern, Karla Contreras, who have done so much to care for and exhibit costumes in our display cases. We also want to thank the City of Culver City who came to our aid when we needed to replace many of the boxes that hold these rare and precious costumes.

A tremendously big "THANK YOU" to Julie Lugo Cerra, our Culver City Historian, who has been such an integral part of our Archives Resource Center since the beginning and continues supporting us every step of the way. And, we couldn't be where we are now without our dear Fred Yglesias who is always there with a helping hand – he's simply great!

When our Culver City Historical Society members and the public attend the April 16th General Membership Meeting, we hope they will be pleased with the progress that has already been made – and we welcome your thoughts and suggestions to our ARC better still!

~ Martha & Sol



~ IN MEMORIAM ~

We are saddened to learn that CCHS members Stan and Selma Abrams recently lost their daughter. Our heartfelt condolences go out to the Abrams' family and friends.



John Battle, grandson of Culver City Founder, Harry Culver, speaks at a recent CC Council Meeting.

	he "Heart of Screenland"	ne Culver City Historical So and to support the Culver City Hist can't do it without YOU!	ociety Today! orical Society Archives & Resource Center (ARC).	
	Түр	ES OF MEMBERSHIP		
Benefactor (\$1000) Organization (\$15) Family Member (\$25)	Business	Lifetime Member (\$250)	Patron Member (\$100) Individual Member (\$15) Family Lifetime Member (\$500)	
Name/Company:		Contact Person:		
Mailing Address: (Street)		(City)	(State/Zip)	
Telephone:	Fax:	Email:		
P.O. Box 3428, Culver City, CA	90231-3428. For furth		Society and mail to 6941 or email: cchistorical@pacbell.com. a exempt status may make such contributions tax deductible.	

BUSINESS MEMBER ROSTER

These fine Culver City area businesses support our work to preserve Culver City history for future generations.

Please show YOUR support by your patronage of their services and products.

Alliance Bank	Harold Hanslmair Ins Agcy, Inc(310) 837-8144
Brundo InteriorsRichard Ross (310) 391-1888	JLF Appraisal ServicesJoel Forman (310) 837-7455
Byco, IncJohn Byers (949) 645-2251	Ken Harada, DDS(310) 837-512
Cantalini's Salerno Beach Rest Lisa Schwab (310) 821-0018	Walter N. Marks Realty(310) 204-1865
Cavanaugh Realtors Dannie Cavanaugh (310) 837-7161	Marcus Accounting Services (310) 397-4696
Culver Center Flowers Mike Eskridge (310) 839-2344	Martin B. Retting, Inc Robert Retting (310) 8372412
Culver Hotel, The Douglas Newton(310) 838-7963	Netzel Associates Paul & Diane Netzel (310) 836-7624
Culver Studios, The(310) 202-1234	Jeffrey S. Penso, M.D (310) 204-6897
Dave Blair Plumbing (310) 397-9493	Petrelli's RestaurantGeorge Petrelli (310) 398-9777
Robert L Duitsman, Attorney At Law (310) 645-6223	Roll 'n Rye Restaurant Rita Zide (310) 390-3497
Flanigan Farms Patsy Flanigan (310) 836-8437	Santa Maria Barbecue Co James Rodrigues (310) 842-8169
Freeman Properties Stuart Freeman (310) 839-7593	Carol Schwab, CC City Attorney
Fresh Paint	Sony Pictures EntertainmentKristin Cavanaugh (310) 244-4000

Culber City Historical Society

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