

SAN JUAN COURIER

A Periodical Publication of the San Juan County Historical Society

Summer 1998

Silverton, San Juan County, Colorado

Mayflower Mill is Central to Society Development

by Darnall "Zeke" Zaroni

As most of our readers probably know by this time, the San Juan County Historical Society is now the proud owner of a magnificent piece of history known as the Mayflower Mill. Included in the mill property is every piece of machinery still in place down to the lathes, drill presses and other tools that were used to keep the mill operating.

Last summer was our first full season with the mill open for tours by the general public. Although attendance was not what was expected (about 20 percent short of putting the society in the black for the operation) the positive feedback and response from those who toured the mill was far better than expected.

The business plan for 1998, due to a limited advertising budget, is to concentrate (no pun intended) efforts on the immediate area, mainly Silverton and Durango. This is being done with distribution of rack cards and advertising in various local publications. The family unit is a primary goal with free gold panning and free admission to children ten and under.

We were fortunate to have been the recipient of an ISTE A Grant last year. This has allowed us to move somewhat faster in regards to a public unisex rest room, watchman's apartment, reception area and other structural changes that would have normally been spread over a longer period of time. This grant has also permitted us to print new rack cards this year and engage in the production of a 30 minute video on the history of the mill that should be finished towards the latter part of June. The video is being produced by Vidion Communications, a Silverton based company.

Construction on the mill building this summer will probably be limited to a few skylights in the crushing plant area. This will allow the elimination of a few more mercury

vapor lights. We will also do some catch-up on a few projects not quite completed last year. With time allowing, a couple of mill floor displays are planned. One will be the erection of a small battery of stamps of older vintage, and the second a breakdown of one ton of ore, showing our visitors the end product after milling; metal vs. waste. This will certainly help them better understand the milling process.

Last summer we tried slabbing some local ore found on mill grounds to see if it would sell as a tourist's souvenir item. It proved so successful that we set up a good sized lapidary shop in the mill office building this past winter. All rock saws, tumblers, etc. were either loaned or given to the Society by different individuals.

What are we planning for the mill? Well really nothing other than preserving its integrity and enhancing accessibility for the public. Our job as a historical society is to record and preserve history, and the mill certainly falls within the perimeters of that. Like any other structure of this size, there is a constant need for upkeep, which will always be with us. There are a number of areas needing work, but one thing that will need attention soon are the outside timber sets that support the conveyor belt ramp which leads from the crushing plant to the top of the mill. Additional timber will have to be installed in that area. It is a major job and will take time.


As funds permit we will be doing more interpretation throughout the mill with signage and possibly an integrated sound system for self-guided tours to supplement the guided tours we now have. Like most things, it takes finances, even for a non-profit organization like the Society. With more patrons, dedicated people, and hopefully additional grants, it will all happen. It will be well worth it; the mill is one of a kind!

MAYFLOWER

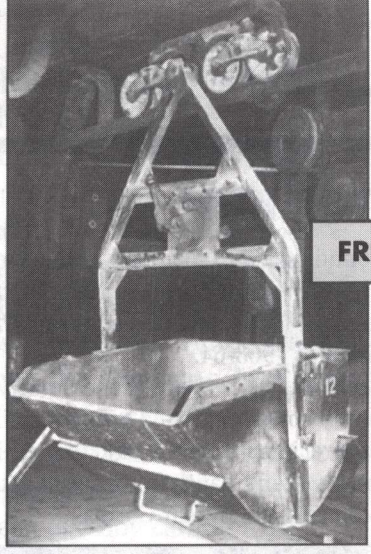
* GOLD MILL *

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OVER

Wide distribution of this rack card, along with an emphasis on local advertising is expected to increase attendance for the 1998 summer season. The back of the card plugs the Jail Museum. A new lapidary shop will be open this summer in the mill office building.

Chairman's Report

Dear Members,

It is springtime in the mountains—we woke up to a dusting of snow. The train started last week, the museum opens next week, and the summer season is upon us. And summer brings more projects! Last year was a busy one, and this it looks like this season will pick up where the last left off. All indications are that it will be a busy summer for tourism. That is good for the museum and the Mill. And for the little town of Silverton.

Last summer ended with snow falling at Animas Forks, curtailing our stabilization project there. What a super project that was! Working with the Bureau of Land Management and the Americorps program, we were able to stabilize and put roofs on three of the seven remaining structures. We did such a good job, you can hardly tell the new work from the old. We applied for and received a second grant from the State Historical Fund to work on the remaining structures this summer, including fortifying the supports under the bay window house, or Duncan house.

Our prize-winning work on the Silverton Town Hall Restoration Project continues to bring us accolades. In August, Richard Moe, chairman of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, came to Silverton to re-award the National Honor Award that we won in 1996. It was so nice to see the people who actually worked on the building there to receive it. Over the winter we traveled to Denver where Fritz Klinke, Dick Beardmore and I gave a program about the project at the annual conference of Colorado Preservation, Inc. CPI is a group dedicated to historic preservation statewide. We also sat on its "Most Endangered Places" committee, helping to choose historic sites in Colorado threatened by everything from neglect and vandalism to the effects of the growth that is happening in our state.

Also over the winter, Allen Nossaman, Zeke Zanoni and I designed several new interpretive signs, similar to the ones that we placed at Eureka and Animas Forks. The most ambitious and informative sign shows the many tram lines at Arrastra Gulch. You will be surprised at how many there were. These signs are being funded by an ISTE grant from the Department of Transportation.

Our involvement with the Animas River Stakeholders and other regional groups continues, all with the thought of protecting our mining heritage. One big project that we are working on is nominating the Red Mountain District to the National Register. What an incredible area that is.

Elsewhere in these pages you will find an article about our proposed plans on the powerhouse site. You may be wondering what economic development has to do with historic preservation, and why the San Juan County Historical Society is getting into that business. Well, prosperity is good for preservation, poverty isn't. Undoubtedly, preservation takes the advocacy that we lovers of history bring to it, but, it also takes bucks. People who can't make a living can't fix up their houses and buildings, either. If we can make a structure into a business incubator, we have not only saved a historic building, but maybe have provided a job or two. And so, dear members, on to summer!

Thanks for your support.

Bev

In Memoriam

Ian Malcolm Thompson, one of the founding board members of the San Juan County Historical Society in 1964, died the evening of April 19, 1998, of cancer. Thompson was a Silverton resident in the early 1960s, and was editor of *The Silverton Standard and Miner* during the winter of 1963-64.

He was a member of the founding seven-member board of the Society, contributing the vision that the San Juan County community had a responsibility to itself to better understand, interpret, and appreciate its history, and to use historical lessons to build the future. Thompson was later an author, mayor of Durango and director of the Crow Canyon Archaeological Center near Cortez.

SAN JUAN COURIER

George Chapman, Editor

Contributors:

Beverly Rich, Allen Nossaman, Zeke Zanoni, Bill Jones, and Duane Murphy

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Mailing address: Post Office Box 154, Silverton, Colorado 81433

San Juan County Historical Society
Officers and Directors, 1998

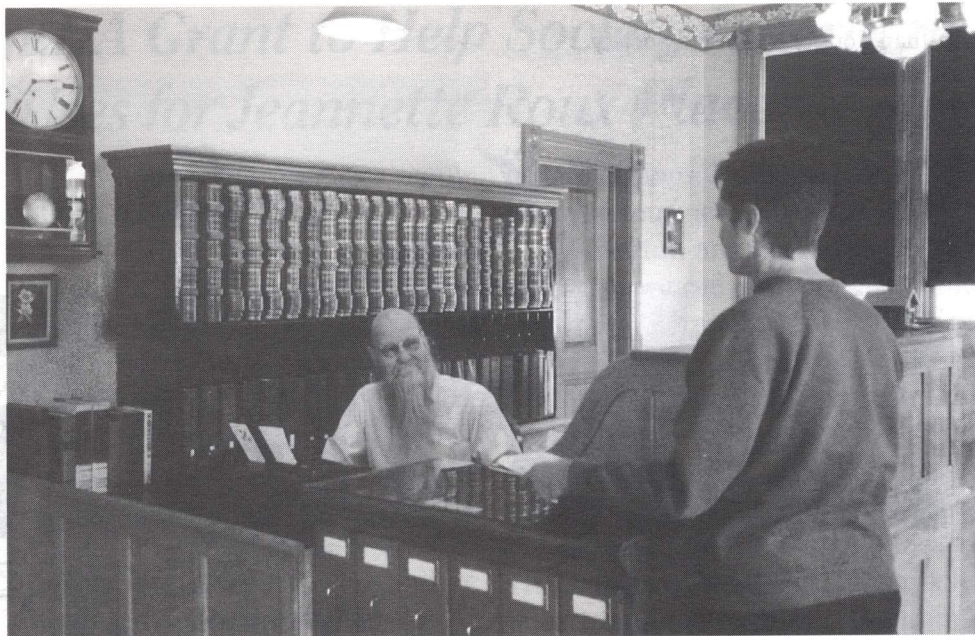
Beverly Rich, Chairman

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Scott Fetchenhier, Vice Chairman

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Archive director Allen Nossaman confers with Society chairman Beverly Rich. In addition to climate controlled storage, the archive building provides work areas and space for researchers to take advantage of the Society's extensive collection.

Archive report

The archive of the San Juan County Historical Society continues to be a vital part of the organization's programs, with more than 250 visits and inquiries during the past calendar year and another 50 detailed researchers utilizing the collections.

Housed in the building immediately adjoining the museum on Courthouse Square in Silverton, the archive is usually open on Monday and Wednesday afternoons all year around, as well as by specific appointment.

Archive director Allen Nossaman said the use of the facility remains steady, with researchers studying everything from genealogy to aerial tramways to structural histories, and with the addition of new materials thoughtfully donated on a continuing basis.

One form of support for the archive project is the Archive Endowment Fund—an endowment initiated by former Silvertonian Ellanore Mathews McKenna. By May 1 of this year, a total of \$6,905 in principal contributions had been made to this fund by thirteen donors, and interest from the endowment is dedicated to helping defray the expenses of operating the archival collections and research facility.

Through various research efforts and cooperative programs, the Historical Society Archive's resources have variously contributed in recent months to development of additional historical signage along the Alpine Loop, studies of water quality issues,

a new book on the Weminuche Wilderness Area, a videotape of the Shenandoah-Dives (Mayflower) Mill for educational and retail purposes, the restoration of Durango's Rochester Hotel on the theme of motion picture filming in the San Juan Basin, and the expansion of a county historical sites inventory. Countless inquiries have been made addressed on family history, the development and demise of the mining industry and the background of historic structures in the Silverton National Registered Historic Landmark District and in San Juan County.

Among archival material recently donated or cataloged are right-of-way maps of much of the Silverton Northern Railroad and all of the Silverton, Gladstone & Northerly Railroad (from a trade with the La Plata County Historical Society); a number of older municipal records from the Town of Silverton; a series of railroad freight records from the 1890s (from Bill Knous); copy negative production of the rare Silver Lake Mine and Waldheim photographs (donated by L. W. Parcell) on display in the museum; the mineralogical library of the late Fred A. Brinker (by Tyler Brinker and Nancy Brinker Marsh), which is complimented by earlier donations from the library of Tom Casadevall, western region director of the U.S. Geological Survey; and the minutes of the town company that developed the short-lived Red Mountain City (Congress P. O.) in 1882-83.



Dan Kalina

A good friend of the Society.

He will be missed by all.

You left us too soon, Danny.

Society Presents Program Series

This summer the Society will present its most ambitious series of programs ever.

Open to members and the general public, the four programs cover a broad range of topics, all of which should be of interest to fans of San Juan County history.

The opening program will be on June 30 at 6 p.m. in the Miner's Union Theatre above the American Legion. The Miner's Union building is a fitting historic spot for a historic series to begin. The presentation will be Silverton's own Vidion Production's video "History of the Mayflower Gold Mill.

The second program in the series will be held on July 21 at 7 p.m. in the recently restored Town Hall Assembly Room. Society board member Scott Fetchenhier will present a slide show, "The Old Hundred Mine" along with a display of various Old Hundred memorabilia and artifacts.

On August 20 at 7 p.m., also at the town hall, Bill Jones will present a slide show "Jeeping the San Juans in Color" which features photographs taken in the 1950s.

The final program will be held at the Archive Building at 7 p.m. on September 23. Archivist Allen Nossaman will share the pre-1880 letters of Silverton's first attorney, Nathaniel Slaymaker. This is not a slide show but a discussion of early life and times in Silverton by the town's eminent historian.

Be sure and plan to join friends at this series. A good response will lead to more programs in the future.

The San Juan County Historical Society

Wants You!



San Juan County Historical Society

Application for Membership — 1998

San Juan County Historical Society • Post Office Box 154 • Silverton, Colorado 81433

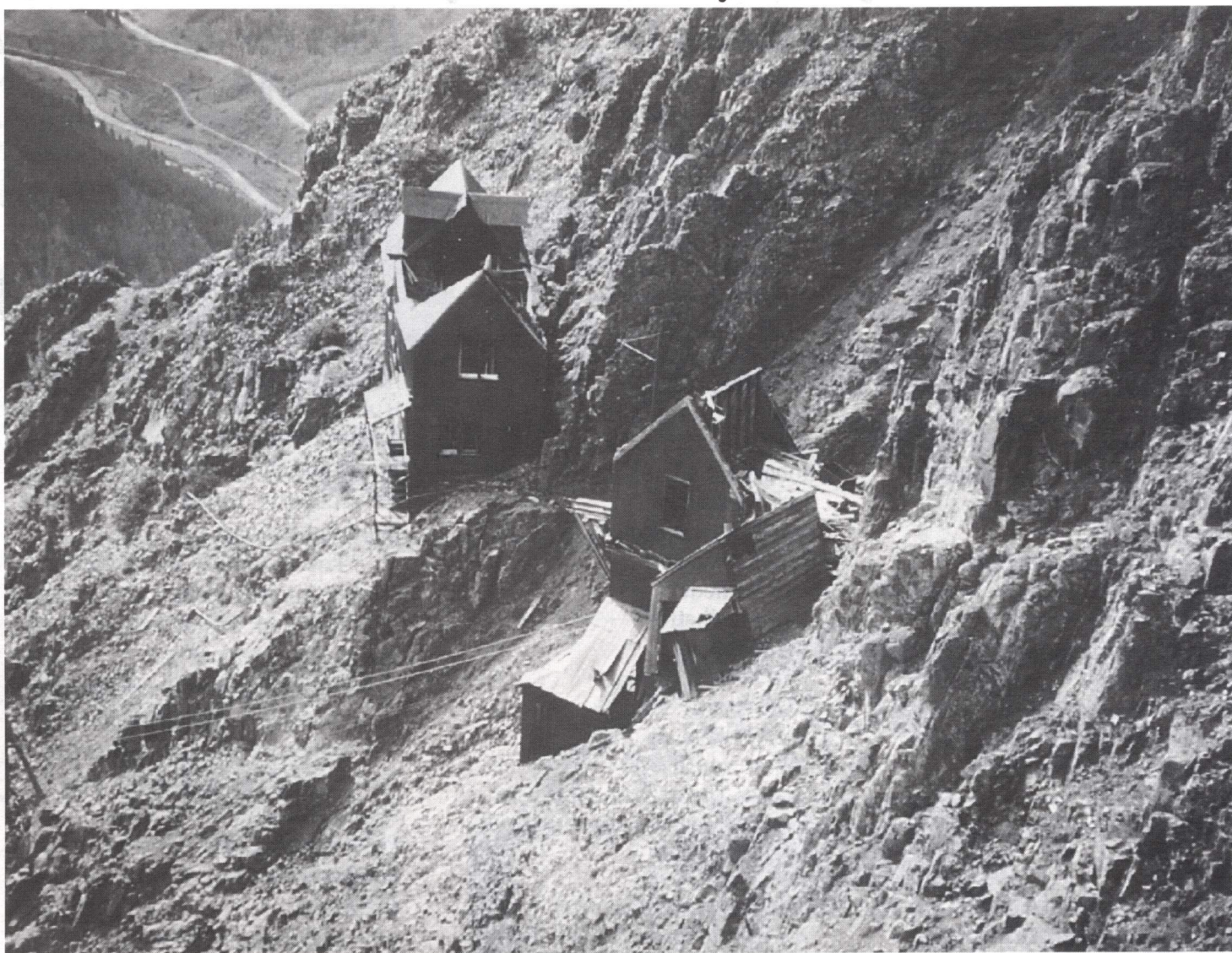
I wish to enroll as a member of the San Juan County Historical Society in the class designated below for the calendar year 1998. I understand that this membership entitles me (and my spouse, if applicable) to a vote at the annual meeting in October, 1998.

- ☐ **Member:** Voting privilege [\$10.00]
- ☐ **Family Member:** Voting privilege, man and wife [\$16.00]
- ☐ **Supporting Member:** Voting privilege, couple, and museum admission for season for immediate family [\$25.00]
- ☐ **Society Patron:** Voting privilege, couple, and season museum admission for immediate family and listing in the San Juan Courier [\$50.00]
- ☐ **Life Membership:** All privileges for life [\$350.00]

Name: _____

Address: _____

Old Hundred Study Funded



We just received word that we have received a \$5000 grant from the State Historical Fund to do some emergency stabilization at the Old Hundred Boardinghouse, shown above. Part of this grant will also pay for an engineering study to see what needs to be done to permanently stabilize this fantastic structure. This grant was co-sponsored by the Colorado Division of Minerals and Geology.

A Day at the Museum

by Duane Murphy

A day at our museum begins as I approach the door and am struck by the beauty of the blooming flowers planted in the ore cars located near our white picket fence. On the "natural" side of the yard are columbine, butter and eggs, and even wild horseradish.

Flower beds near the mowed lawn contain larkspur and mountain bluets. Around the corner, a specimen rhubarb plant shows the visitors Silverton's most common domestic edible plant. Familiar summer visiting hummingbirds feed at the museum's feeder.

After I place the day's cash in the register, I ready the visitor's book and count the souvenir tickets, which by the way are very popular, and place

them by the souvenir gold vials. Before the lights are all turned on there are often visitors already coming through the door.

They are greeted and given a quick orientation of the building and its exhibits. Before they trek up the stairs to the jail cells, they often stop to look over our selection of post cards, local interest books, rhubarb jam, and local cookbooks.

The routine greeting is repeated many times through the day as more groups come to enjoy our collection. There are questions and shared memories over such things as our antique wall telephone. Among the favorites are the Silverton Northern Railroad buffet and prune soup.

I'm frequently asked "how long does the museum take?" To which I respond that "a teen age boy can do it in four and a half minutes but a museum lover could take four and a half hours.

Some of the more enjoyable moments come when a group of visitors with common interest end up in the main room. One day three very tired young women dragged in having just hiked to Silver Lake and back. As they were catching their breath, others heard their comments and said they had been to Silver Lake just the day before. Then a Texan joined the conversation indicating he and his family had driven to the lake the day before "with no trouble at all." At this point, the commodore of the Silver Lake Yacht Club (and incidentally our

mayor) showed up to deliver rhubarb cookbooks from the library. The ensuing conversation was spirited to say the least.

One day a businessman type came in dressed as a real dude with stretch jeans, a beaded Indian shirt and a cowboy style vest. He said he had to find a phone immediately and asked if he could use ours. Since it was a toll free call, I obliged. He proceeded to call his stock broker. The room was empty when he started but visitors accumulated in the room and since he was facing the wall, he was unaware of their presence. His end of the conversation went something like: "what, WHAT?... my God sell, SELL, Sell at once!" His embarrassment was obvious when he turned and saw the audience.

Funny? Maybe you just had to be there.

The day passes quickly. Soon the late afternoon sun pours in the windows and it is time for me to put up the closed sign, count the money, record the attendance, make sure no one is lingering in the cellar, and shut off the lights.

How long since you have visited the museum? There are new displays every year and not a week goes by without someone bringing in another artifact or archival item. There are many requests for family history, photographs and a strong interest in "the cemetery book." Come again soon and in the meantime perhaps you can interest someone else in being a member of the San Juan County Historical Society.

San Juan County Historical Society *EDA Grant to Help Society Determine Uses for Jeannette Roux Placer*

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Two of the Society's new acquisitions are the powerhouse and mule barn. Both buildings are on the National Register. They were included in the donation of the Mayflower Mill by Sunnyside Gold Corporation.

Built in 1906 by the Animas Power and Light Company, the brick structure housed a substation that transferred electricity through lines from the famous hydro-plants at Tacoma and Ames to the higher mines and camps north of Silverton. Its decorative round windows belie its industrial use.

The two-story mule barn has steeply pitched gables and a wood shingled roof. Inside are the stalls and it still smells of hay.

Another part of the power company complex, the office building, was moved through Silverton a dozen years ago and made into the Visitor's Center. In 1912, the Animas Power and Light Company was bought by Western Colorado Power Company.

In October of 1997, the Society received a \$12,000 grant from the Economic Development Administration. It is being matched by \$7,000 from the Society. In 1996 the Society received the donation of the Mayflower Mill from Sunnyside Gold Corporation. Included in that donation was the Jeannette Roux Placer, a 12 acre parcel of land on which sit these buildings and two modern

metal buildings. The historic buildings are in serious need of repair.

Silverton and San Juan County have experienced a severe economic downturn since the Sunnyside Mine shut down in 1991. The population has fallen by half and unemployment is up significantly. There are firms who desire to move here or operate businesses here, but there is no suitable land or buildings in which to locate. The available "storefront" property in Silverton is too high-priced and not suitable for industrial uses.

The Society, with its large parcel of flat, accessible land and with usable buildings, is uniquely situated to provide that needed opportunity as well as to preserve the historic structures through adaptive reuse.

The purpose of the grant project is to determine if a business incubator and industrial park is feasible, to develop a general design plan which will include architectural and engineering requirements, and cost projections for implementing the plan. Both public and private involvement is being solicited.

Early indications are showing the need for a site like this is strong. If the plan proves feasible, the Society will go back to the EDA, as well as other funding sources, for its implementation. We believe the industrial park and business incubator will attract new industry, encourage local business expansion and provide year around jobs. It will also provide the Society, with its limited resources, a way to preserve two National Register buildings.

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by Freda Peterson

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Volume I, first available last year, is still available.

Order either volume by mail for \$64.00 including shipping and handling. Colorado residents please add \$4.20 sales tax.

Sorry, no member discount on this item.

Many More Mountains, Volume 3, Rails into Silverton

The third volume of Allen Nossaman's detailed history of Silverton and San Juan County was recently released. Covering the arrival of the Denver & Rio Grande Western, it is of special interest to rail fans.

Available from the Society for \$43.00 including shipping and handling. Colorado residents please add \$2.73 sales tax.

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