

(Excerpts from the nomination, selected for readability)

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service
National Register of Historic Places
Hobson-Gehlen General Merchandise Store, Marion Co., Oregon

Specialty store, late Victorian, Italianate, concrete foundation,
wood shiplap walls, metal roof.

The circa 1885 Hobson-Gehlen General Merchandise Store is located at 189 N. 2nd Avenue, at the intersection of N. 2nd Avenue and Florence Street, in Stayton, Marion County, Oregon. The oldest remaining wood-framed commercial building in the community, the two-story store faces east on a flat .21-acre, 93- by 100-foot lot in Block 1 of the 1872 Original Town plat of Stayton. Originally an Italianate false-front type, the Hobson-Gehlen Store now presents a front-gable roofline, the false front having been removed following damage sustained in the Columbus Day storm.

The building is today comprised of the main two-story volume with a smaller one-story hip-roof section attached to the rear (west) facade. Immediately to the south of this original building is an early garage addition. Elements of the Italianate style are evident in the eave details along the north and south side elevations, as well as in the articulation of the wooden storefront. Overall, the Hobson-Gehlen Store retains integrity of location, materials, workmanship, setting, feeling and association. In the area of design the integrity has been somewhat compromised by the removal of the original false front and minor changes to the storefront, but the building continues to clearly convey its nineteenth century construction and function, and is the only surviving example of a nineteenth-century wood-framed commercial building in the town of Stayton.

The Hobson-Gehlen General Merchandise Store is located in the mid-Willamette Valley town of Stayton, population 7,800, located approximately seventeen miles east of the State capital of Salem.

The building is located in Block 1 of the Original Town Plat on a flat, rectangular, 0.21-acre lot measuring 93 feet wide by 100 feet deep. The neighborhood today contains a mix of late nineteenth- and twentieth-century commercial and residential buildings, along with vacant lots and surface parking; the lots immediately across N. 2nd Avenue to the east are now vacant but historically were occupied by a series of wood-frame commercial and residential buildings. This was the area of earliest commercial development in the community, though the commercial core is now concentrated on 3rd Street one block to the east. The only landscape feature is a deciduous tree located at the southwest corner, which may date to the early- to mid-twentieth century.

As a typical commercial building of its period, the main two-story volume of the Hobson-Gehlen Store is rectangular in shape, measuring in total approximately 27 feet wide along the street front and 69 feet deep. Resting on a concrete and wood timber foundation, the balloon-framed walls rise two full stories, and the front-gable roof is clad in corrugated sheet metal. Originally designed with a false-front, that feature was removed in 1963 revealing the building's front gable roofline. The front (east) facade now displays a pent roof above the historic wood-framed storefront. Rising from the roof peak at the eastern end of the building is a simple red brick chimney that historically serviced a wood stove.





A one-story volume extends from the back (west) end of the building approximately 26 feet. This section appears to be early, if not original, construction also balloon framed, and has a hipped roof. Having been damaged by fire at an unknown date some years ago, it is currently being repaired and updated with new vinyl windows and T 1-11 siding.

Immediately to the south of the two-story primary volume is a rectangular one-story garage, possibly built sometime between 1908 and 1913. Measuring approximately 22 feet along the street by 40 feet deep, this smaller wood-framed building has a post-and-pier foundation of wood, balloon-framed walls and a shed roof sloping down from the false front facade toward the back. The structure is minimally connected to the Hobson-Gehlen Store via a ledger attached to the south exterior wall of the store's two-story volume. A garage bay faces the street, and an interior door once provided access between the garage and store buildings. Although it appears to retain relatively good historical integrity, due to deterioration and the weight of a late snowfall in the winter of 2012, this building is in poor condition with a partially collapsed roof and failing floor structure.

The two-story Hobson-Gehlen store building is constructed with balloon framing, studs placed 16 inches on center, and is clad on the north and south sides in 7¼-inch shiplap siding fastened with cut nails. The shiplap siding truncates approximately 12 inches from the eave, at which point a frieze panel is delineated by a narrow, applied horizontal molding running the full length of the building. From this molding to the eave the frieze is further demarcated by the application of vertically applied 3½ to 4-inch V-groove boards. The approximately 12- to 14-inch overhanging boxed eaves are embellished with bed molding and decorative Italianate brackets arranged in pairs along the north and south sides of the building.

Fenestration on the building's north and south side walls is irregular. Windows are wood framed one-over-one sash with lamb's tongue detail on the upper sash. They are trimmed with simple flat boards, some with perimeter molding that may have been added after initial construction. One south side window historically lighted the first floor but has been temporarily obscured by a tarp; two windows light the second floor on the south side, and two on the north.

The one-story hip-roof volume on the rear (east) is currently covered with tarps, and sections have been resided in T 1-11. The date of this portion of the building is unclear, but it or a feature of similar dimensions appears on the 1913 Sanborn map. It may be original to the building's circa 1885 construction. Heavily tarped at the time this nomination was being prepared, undated photographs taken by the Marion County Assessor's Office indicate it is or was also of balloon frame construction clad in shiplap similar to the front two-story volume. The hip roof displayed a shallow boxed eave with a horizontal board frieze and no brackets.

Typical of nineteenth and early twentieth century commercial design, the three-bay wood-framed,

storefront is the dominant architectural feature of the building, with a central recessed entrance flanked by generous storefront windows. At the foundation level, the wood bulkheads abut the concrete sidewalk and rise approximately 18 inches to the display window sills. Historically comprised of panels with inset planed boards, the south side remains largely intact while the north side has been stripped of its original molding and decorative detail. One historic display window, a large vertically-divided two-pane fixed sash, remains in the south bay; a slightly smaller, new, fixed single-pane replacement fills the north display window bay. Some storefront trim has been removed, a change that was likely the result of the removal of the false front following the Columbus Day Storm and the recent replacement of the north-side storefront window.

Paired doors mark the central entrance and though historic, they are not original. Each door measures approximately four feet wide and is comprised of six lights over three solid recessed vertical panels, a design The exact date is not currently known. This date bracket is based on a 1908 photograph in which the addition is not present, and the 1913 Sanborn map, on which it is. In 1913 it functioned as grocery storage, and in 1931 as an auto garage. Aerial photographs, though difficult to decipher, clearly show a building attached here starting in 1944, suggestive of its probable 1920s vintage. After the Gehlens sold this building in 1924 to auto dealers Oliver Baker and William Ryan, the doorway in the central bay was widened from its original narrower configuration, presumably to accommodate the building's new use. A modern interior overhead door has been installed to provide adequate security while allowing for the retention of the original doors. The large, divided-light transom windows that span the width of the storefront above the display windows and entrance bay are original. The solid panel immediately above the transoms is covered in horizontal boards, and serves as the sign panel for the building as it did historically.

Visually framing this entire system are square, stylized "fluted" wood pilasters at either corner, with a full-width storefront cornice displaying a denticulated bed molding detail protruding slightly over the storefront windows. The pilasters, continuous but simplified alongside the sign panel above the lintel, are capped with a double course of molding approximately twelve inches below the soffit. Originally detailed with applied moldings arranged in rectangular panels at the bulkhead, storefront and transom levels, several of these details have been removed, and the pilasters today show a more simplified surface.

The "cornice" above the transom historically divided the storefront from the solid false front that was removed around 1963, thus exposing the gable end and forming a pent roof. This feature was and is essentially a continuation of the eave line that exists along the north and south side elevations. With the front gable exposed, it now reads as a pent roof. Both the front and rear gable ends appear to be covered with the same 7¼-inch shiplap siding found on the lower side walls. Early painted signage located on the front (east) gable end has been painted over.

The interior of the building is divided into front and rear spaces, the front (east) one-half of the first floor being the public mercantile section, and the rear (west) half housing administrative and residential space. Access to the garage addition to the south, historically through a wood five-panel door that remains in place, has been blocked by merchandise display cases. A wider opening along the south wall, historically providing access to the one-story south side addition, has been infilled and faced with wide horizontal boards. The display areas flanking the front entrance continue to be used for merchandise display.

An historic wood floor appears to remain in place beneath the present covering of plywood or particle board, which has been painted. Walls are covered in narrow, vertical V-groove boards from floor to ceiling on both levels. The mercantile space is essentially open to the ceiling, with the exception of the perimeter, which is rimmed with the curved upper mezzanine hanging from the roof framing. In addition to the storefront, only the rear south wall window provides natural light directly into the lower floor area.

The second floor level is visually dominated by the mezzanine, an elegant curvilinear feature that sweeps into two mirrored horseshoe-shaped openings over the mercantile space. The framing, floor and railing of the mezzanine all appear to be original. The turned balusters and shaped handrail are particularly well-preserved. The far southwest corner of the mezzanine seems to have been truncated at an unknown date, likely to accommodate the current (newer) stair access. The original configuration of this corner section is not currently known. The rear portion of the upper floor is an open room (not part of the mezzanine structure) measuring 27 by 19 feet. Floors throughout are fir tongue-and-groove. The ceiling is also covered in painted 4-inch V-groove boards. The entire upstairs area is currently used for storage. Storefront transoms and double-hung windows provide natural light to this space.

The interior of the rear, one-story section was not accessible. The interior of the garage attached to the south is open, with roof and floor framing, as well as flooring, is deteriorated due to exposure to the elements.

Property owner Will Myers was told of the removal of the false front following damage sustained in the 1962 Columbus Day storm by former occupant Beverly Gilson (no date), and aerial photographs of 1967 seem to support this time frame.

It appears to have been utilitarian in character, with open stud walls and ceiling, plank floors and access both from both the exterior and from within the neighboring two-story, former merchandise store.

Originally the Hobson-Gehlen Store appears to have been constructed as a single, two-story volume with a one-story extension to the rear (west). An addition to the south side is evident on Sanborn maps of 1913 and 1931. The original central entrance doorway was widened slightly to accommodate an automobile entrance, though the actual bay width appears unaltered. This change likely occurred in the mid-1920s, a theory based on the design characteristics of the current doors coupled with the building's ownership history; it also corresponds to the shift from mercantile to auto-related use after 1924. The newer rolling overhead door installed on the interior of the building at this central bay provides security and allows the original paired doors to remain in place. When open, the overhead door is minimally visible from the exterior, though it does block the center-bay transom lights from the interior. The original false front with bracketed Italianate cornice remained in place until about 1963. Some minor changes were made to the storefront detailing at an unknown date.

The current footprint of the building appears very much as it was drawn on the 1931 Sanborn, with the exception of the two small projections at the northwest rear corner, which have been replaced with three larger open sheds.

The southwest corner of the mezzanine appears to have been truncated, probably to accommodate the current stair, which is a later, undated alteration. The rail in this area shows signs of having been altered, particularly in that it dies somewhat awkwardly into the trim of the upper window. It is possible that the mezzanine's original configuration was entirely symmetrical, and that access to the upper level was achieved from a point further to the rear of the building, but this has not been confirmed. Deciphering changes through analysis of flooring patches and rail details is difficult for reasons of limited accessibility (the mezzanine is currently used for storage of large boxes and business merchandise/stock).

As the oldest commercial building in Stayton, and the only remaining of wood-frame construction from the nineteenth century, the Hobson-Gehlen General Merchandise Store is an important architectural and historical marker for the community. In spite of twentieth century alterations, the building retains a

high degree of historical integrity, and the physical attributes of the store, both inside and out, continue to convey its circa 1885 construction date, historical functions, and long period of significance as a commercial building from the early days of Stayton's establishment.

The Hobson-Gehlen Store continues to convey its historic appearance in large part through the wooden storefront system in spite of several changes made in the twentieth century. As the last remaining nineteenth-century, wood-framed commercial building in Stayton, the building remains an important architectural and historical marker for the community.

The circa 1885 Hobson-Gehlen General Merchandise Store is being nominated to the National Register under the existing "Historic Downtown Area of Stayton, Oregon" Multiple Property Submission (MPS) of 2006. Locally significant in the areas of Commerce and Architecture, the building meets National Register Criterion A under this MPS for its long association with the commercial development and activities in the community, and as the oldest remaining commercial building in Stayton. Built circa 1885 by William H. Hobson for use as a general merchandise store, the building ownership was transferred in 1896 to Theodore Gehlen who, with his sons Charles and Nicholas, ran the Gehlen General Merchandise business until his untimely death in 1904. From 1904 until 1924, Charles, Nicholas and John Gehlen continued operating the business at this location.

Following the Gehlens' sale of the building in 1924, the building was used variously for auto-related purposes and a welding shop, through the mid-twentieth century. The building is the only remaining wood-frame commercial building in Stayton, displaying influences of the Italianate style that was popular during the 1870s and 1880s in Oregon, encompassing its approximate date of construction. Despite some alteration it continues to illustrate its late-nineteenth century construction through both interior and exterior materials and design details. The Period of Significance spans the years from circa 1885 to 1955, the years during which it served as both general merchandise store (c 1885-1924) and auto-related business (1925-1955 and beyond).

The Hobson-Gehlen General Merchandise Store is locally significant in the areas of Commerce and Architecture. Its position at the west end of Florence Street on N. 2nd Avenue was historically a prominent one in the middle of the early commercial and industrial area of Stayton; no other buildings of this early period of development survive. Historically, the area immediately surrounding the Hobson-Gehlen Store consisted of a mix of commercial, industrial and residential development, much of which has since disappeared. The only contemporaneous building remaining is the circa-1895 residence located immediately to the north of the store.

In the area of Architecture, the Hobson-Gehlen Store is significant as the only extant nineteenth-century wood-framed commercial building in the city. Despite some alteration, the building clearly reflects its circa 1885 Italianate stylistic influences on the exterior through the elongated, one-over-one-light wood sash windows and eave details, including a vertical-board frieze and decorative brackets. Many historic interior features also remain intact, including the basic spatial arrangement, wall and ceiling finishes, and most notably the curvilinear, theater-like mezzanine with its original turned balustrade. As noted in the MPS (Multiple Property Submission), all of the early commercial buildings in Stayton were wood framed, many with false fronts. Of the sixty-five identified in the early 1880s by an early resident, fifteen were retail or service buildings in the downtown. Today, one remains, the Hobson-Gehlen Store.

Wood-framed commercial buildings were commonplace in mid-nineteenth century Oregon towns. In most communities, the transition from wood to masonry (usually brick) in commercial construction occurred due to fires that would ravage large tracts of closely-placed and flammable wooden downtown structures. Stayton did not suffer such a devastating fire, but turned to masonry in the early twentieth century as a preventive measure, utilizing locally-manufactured concrete block:

“The streetscape of 3rd Avenue was particularly dramatic where frame, one and two story, nineteenth century buildings lined one side of the street, and new two-story masonry buildings lined the other.”

As the town expanded the early wood-framed buildings were replaced with larger masonry blocks, forming the streetscape apparent today. By the early- to mid-twentieth century, Main Streets throughout Oregon displayed few, if any, nineteenth-century, wood-frame, commercial buildings. Those that do remain provide an important reminder not only of the period architecture, but of the needs of the community at the time, reflecting the types of businesses and building functions that were common for the period but may no longer exist.

There appear to be no extant comparative properties within the local Stayton context. According to the Oregon State Historic Preservation Office database of identified historic properties, this is the oldest building of any type remaining in the community. At the county level, the Hobson-Gehlen Store appears to be the oldest identified wood frame commercial building surviving in Marion County, with only three others identified.

These include the following:

Commercial Building 21781 Main Street NE, Aurora ca 1890
House 1391 Broadway NE, Salem ca 1890
Russell Building 201-203 N. Water St., Silverton ca 1890

The commercial building in Aurora is of similar scale to the Hobson-Gehlen Store, but without the Italianate stylistic features that help date the subject building to the 1880s. The Aurora example is a false-front type, with a storefront altered with modern windows and a deep, full-width front porch.

The Russell Building is a larger building, consisting of two asymmetrical storefronts flanking a central entrance access to the upper floor. It is not a false-front building and does not exhibit the stylistic details (i.e. of the Italianate style) seen on the Hobson-Gehlen building. It appears to retain good historical integrity, and is a contributing property in the Silverton Commercial Historic District.

According to the “Historic Downtown Area of Stayton” Multiple Property Submission, ...the registration requirements for commercial buildings in Stayton vary according to the subtype. In general, however, buildings should retain the character-defining architectural details and be reflective of the workmanship and design intent. Buildings should also occupy their original location, exist within a setting that was consistent with their historic environment and retain their historic feeling and association.

With regard to wood-framed commercial buildings, the document goes on to state that, Due to the relative rarity and reduced integrity of the surviving wood-frame commercial buildings, listing is possible only if the building retains character-defining interior and/or exterior features. Building alterations that occurred during the Stayton Multiple Property Submission's period of significance does not preclude a resource's nomination but may actually contribute to the building's significance as reflective of larger architectural trends or movements. In some cases, a resource may be nominated only if rehabilitations are undertaken to retain existing historic materials. If replacement of fabric is necessary, missing or damaged architectural features should be replaced with in-kind materials. If no physical evidence for these features remains, then their presence can be verified through historic photographs or other documentary evidence.

The Hobson-Gehlen Store retains a high degree of integrity of location, workmanship, materials, feeling and association. The building's interior is particularly good, retaining integrity of design,

workmanship, materials and feeling. In the area of design the building displays the subtle alterations made in the mid-1920s and as a result, clearly reflects its circa 1885 design and function as well as its auto-era, post-1920s appearance thus illustrating larger trends of commerce in the community (from small-scale mercantile to auto-related business).

The store's immediate setting has changed due to the loss of many of the surrounding wood-framed buildings that were present in the nineteenth and early twentieth century. Although some of the characteristic features of the Hobson-Gehlen Store have been lost or removed - namely the false front and some of the storefront detailing - the building still conveys its early construction date and ongoing commercial function. Clear evidence of the lost design features and overall appearance remain in at least one historic photograph, and these elements could be accurately reproduced if desired.

The building was specifically called out in the MPS, and the assessment made at that time suggested that, The Hobson/Gehlen building may also be significant under Criteria [sic] B for its association with an important community leader and merchant. As the city's lone nineteenth century example of false front commercial architecture, the building has been extensively altered. The building, however, offers an opportunity to explore the transition from frame to masonry building in Stayton.

Although not being nominated under Criterion B, the building is associated with William H. Hobson (1847-1932), an early and successful businessman, politician and community member. Born in Jackson county, Missouri, March 14, 1847, he was brought to Oregon by his parents that same year. In 1848 they came to Oregon City and soon after the father took up a donation land claim near here [Stayton], being one of the first settlers in the locality.

Mr. Hobson attended the district school and later attended Sublimity college... He returned to Stayton in October, 1871 and with his father he opened the first store here. He continued in the mercantile business for 50 years. In 1875-6 Mr. Hobson, in partnership with Uriah Whitney, built the Stayton flour mill, which they owned for many years. Later Mr. Hobson and Whitney, in association with Thomas Simms, Lee Brown and John Shaw founded Mill City, building a large sawmill there. In 1895 he was elected as state senator from Marion and Linn counties and served for eight years. He...served as postmaster, mayor and at the time of his death [in 1932] had been school clerk for many years.

The Hobson-Gehlen Store has been altered since Hobson's construction and eleven year period of ownership, but does appear to be the last remaining resource in the town of Stayton associated with Hobson. In part because of the alterations that occurred in the mid-twentieth century, decades after Hobson's ownership, the building's National Register eligibility is strongest under Criterion A for its clear association with Stayton's commercial development, and under Criterion C as the last remaining wood-frame commercial building in the community.

The community of Stayton was initially settled in 1866 on what was earlier Stephen Porter's 1850 donation claim. When Drury Smith Stayton purchased the 41 acres that would later become the town of Stayton, his plan was to create water-powered milling opportunities by diverting the Santiam River via a series of ditches. Two years later a wool carding plant was operational, and this was followed in 1870 by a sawmill. The six-block Stayton Original Town plat was laid out and a post office established with the name of Stayton in 1872.

Growth continued in the form of industrial (primarily milling) and transportation system development through the 1870s and early 1880s. Commercial activities were initiated "...in 1871 [when] W.H. Hobson set up a general merchandise store in a vacant building near the Marion County side of the Santiam Ferry crossing... Business was so brisk that Hobson soon relocated his store onto one of the Water Street lots of the new town of Stayton and continued as a storekeeper, in various locations, for 40 years."

William H. Hobson was born in Missouri in 1847, and was but a baby when his parents Hadley and Emily (Speinhaur) Hobson chose to leave that state and travel to Oregon via California. They settled a 640-acre donation claim near Sublimity in 1850, and eventually acquired some 1,500 acres of land. By the age of twenty, after being educated in local schools, including Sublimity College, William Hobson was already engaged in local business:

By the time he had reached his twentieth year...[he] conducted the store owned by his father for a time. Subsequently, in Aumsville, he managed the business of Simpson, Hunt & Co., and then went to Sublimity and started a small grocery store. Upon the expiration of a year he located in Stayton, where he engaged in the grocery business until 1871. From that time until 1874 he enjoyed a general trade at Stayton in partnership with Uriah Whitney ...in 1876 the partners built the Gardner grist-mill at Stayton, and in connection therewith operated a general store. Mr. Whitney withdrew from the association in 1883...and thereafter Mr. Hobson took as his partners Messrs. Shaw and Simms. The building was afterward enlarged to meet the demands of an increasing trade.

Hobson made multiple land purchases between 1873 and 1883 in what is now downtown Stayton, and had the subject building constructed with the assistance of John Shaw and Thomas Sims in the middle years of the 1880s.

This general merchandise business remained in Hobson's ownership until 1896, when he sold "stock and store to Gehlen & Brown."

Theodore Gehlen and family had arrived in Oregon from Iowa in 1892. Born in Luxembourg in 1846, Gehlen came to America in 1863, and became a naturalized citizen in 1864. In 1870 or 1871 in Illinois, he met and married Appollonia List, born in 1851. By 1880 the Gehlens had relocated to Iowa, and several years later again relocated, this time to Oregon.

With the purchase of Hobson's building and business, Gehlen ran Gehlen's General Merchandise Store with the help of sons Nicholas (born 1877) and Charles (born 1879) as clerks. Theodore's sudden death in March of 1904 was a sad and unexpected event. The Salem Daily Capital Journal reported that he was, ...one of the best men in that community [of Stayton], a man of great good will and many neighborly qualities - of the very best and most loveable men in the country. Mr. Gehlen leaves a wife and eight children - one married son - to mourn his death. He was the proprietor of a grocery store and a farm at Stayton, was an honest man and a good business man, and had not an enemy in the world.

Following their father's passing, Nicholas and Charles continued running the business for a number of months. Nicholas attempted to sell out in late 1905, but apparently retained ownership along with brother Charles, as they were listed in the 1907-1908 directories as proprietors of the Gehlen Bros. General Store.

Starting in 1906, grocery delivery was offered free of charge to any location in the city. In 1910, John A. Gehlen, a younger brother, began his involvement with the business, and in that year Charles married Henrietta Gooderham.

For the following ten years, Charles, along with brothers John and Nicholas continued to operate and grow the general merchandise business, which sold a wide variety of goods from fashionable shoes to groceries. Nicholas' death in 1920 left Charles and John to continue in business for the next twenty years (until 1924 in the subject building, and thereafter at a new location on 3rd Avenue).

After twenty-seven years of ownership, the Gehlens sold the subject building to Oliver Baker and William E. Ryan in 1924. Baker was the proprietor of Baker Chevrolet Company in Stayton; William Ryan ran auto garages (Bush Street Garage and South Salem Garage) in Salem.

It was likely around this time that the front door alterations were made, as by 1930 Earl Foster was renting the building and using it for his auto wrecking business.

In 1931, after a brief exchange of ownership with W.T. and Minnie Anderson, Baker and Ryan sold the property to Foster. Foster retained ownership until his death around 1938. In 1939, two of his children were listed as plaintiffs in a foreclosure proceeding in which the City of Stayton gained ownership of the building for the sum of \$863.65.

By 1940, Stayton city directories list Charlie Sims as the occupant, and the 1940 census listed Sims, along with his wife Reva and three children, as occupants of 189 N. 2nd , renting the place for \$15.00 per month. Charles Sims was identified in that census as a mechanic, with his wife as a clerk at their "auto wrecking & repair" shop. In 1945 the City sold the property to Sims, where he continued his business; the Sims Machine Shop appeared in city directories until the mid-1950s.

Following Charles' death, his widow Reva Sims sold the building to Elmer and Helen Klamp in 1983.

Today the building houses the Trask Mercantile Thrift Store. Although most of the buildings that historically surrounded the Hobson-Gehlen Store are now gone, its highly visible position at the corner intersection of N. 2nd Avenue and Florence Street affords the building a prominent place to shine as the last remaining wood-framed commercial building in Stayton.

Fifteen years his junior, Charles Gehlen's young wife Henrietta was born in 1894 in Pennsylvania, but had lived in Stayton with her mother since sometime after her father's 1907 death in Pennsylvania.

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