

**NOMINATION OF HISTORIC BUILDING, STRUCTURE, SITE, OR OBJECT
PHILADELPHIA REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
PHILADELPHIA HISTORICAL COMMISSION**

**SUBMIT ALL ATTACHED MATERIALS ON PAPER AND IN ELECTRONIC FORM (CD, EMAIL, FLASH DRIVE)
ELECTRONIC FILES MUST BE WORD OR WORD COMPATIBLE**

1. ADDRESS OF HISTORIC RESOURCE (must comply with an Office of Property Assessment address)

Street address: 3922 Spruce Street, Philadelphia, PA
Postal code: 19104 Councilmanic District: District 3

2. NAME OF HISTORIC RESOURCE

Historic Name: 3922 Spruce Street
Current/Common Name: _____

3. TYPE OF HISTORIC RESOURCE

Building Structure Site Object

4. PROPERTY INFORMATION

Occupancy: occupied vacant under construction unknown
Current use: Private home

5. BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Please attach

6. DESCRIPTION

Please attach

7. SIGNIFICANCE

Please attach the Statement of Significance.
Period of Significance (from year to year): from 1890 to 1890
Date(s) of construction and/or alteration: 1890
Architect, engineer, and/or designer: Willis Gaylord Hale
Builder, contractor, and/or artisan: William Weightman, Developer
Original owner: _____
Other significant persons: _____

CRITERIA FOR DESIGNATION:

The historic resource satisfies the following criteria for designation (check all that apply):

- (a) Has significant character, interest or value as part of the development, heritage or cultural characteristics of the City, Commonwealth or Nation or is associated with the life of a person significant in the past; or,
- (b) Is associated with an event of importance to the history of the City, Commonwealth or Nation; or,
- (c) Reflects the environment in an era characterized by a distinctive architectural style; or,
- (d) Embodies distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style or engineering specimen; or,
- (e) Is the work of a designer, architect, landscape architect or designer, or engineer whose work has significantly influenced the historical, architectural, economic, social, or cultural development of the City, Commonwealth or Nation; or,
- (f) Contains elements of design, detail, materials or craftsmanship which represent a significant innovation; or,
- (g) Is part of or related to a square, park or other distinctive area which should be preserved according to an historic, cultural or architectural motif; or,
- (h) Owing to its unique location or singular physical characteristic, represents an established and familiar visual feature of the neighborhood, community or City; or,
- (i) Has yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in pre-history or history; or
- (j) Exemplifies the cultural, political, economic, social or historical heritage of the community.

8. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Please attach

9. NOMINATOR

Organization _____ Date September 22, 2018

Corey Loftus

Name with Title Edited and supplemented by PHC staff Email cloftusm@gmail.com

Street Address 220 Curwen Road Telephone 610-291-7412

City, State, and Postal Code Bryn Mawr, PA 19010

Nominator is is not the property owner.

PHC USE ONLY

Date of Receipt: 6/18/2018 (revision submitted 9/22/2018)

Correct-Complete Incorrect-Incomplete Date: 11/9/2018

Date of Notice Issuance: 11/9/2018

Property Owner at Time of Notice

Name: John P. Primiano

Address: 3922 Spruce Street

City: Philadelphia State: PA Postal Code: 19104

Date(s) Reviewed by the Committee on Historic Designation: 12/12/2018 *CHD recommended designation under Criterion E; nomination didn't satisfy Criterion A

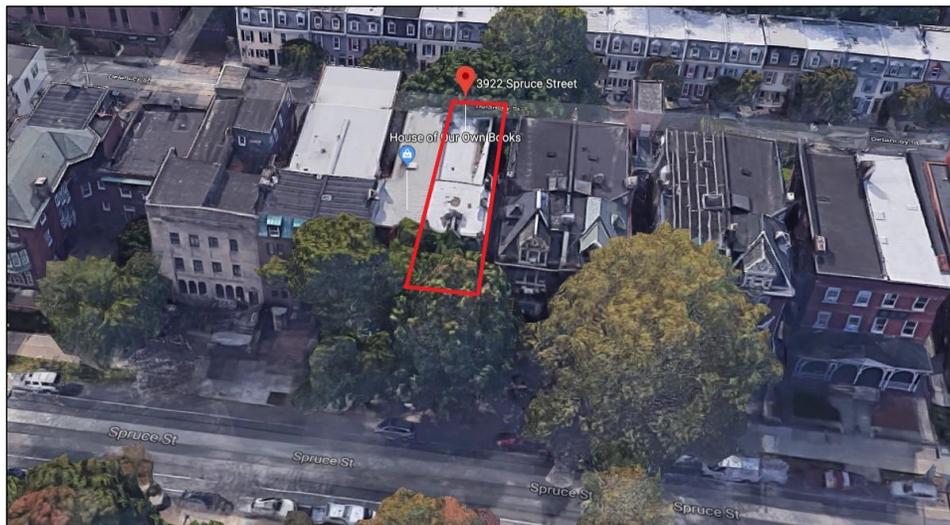
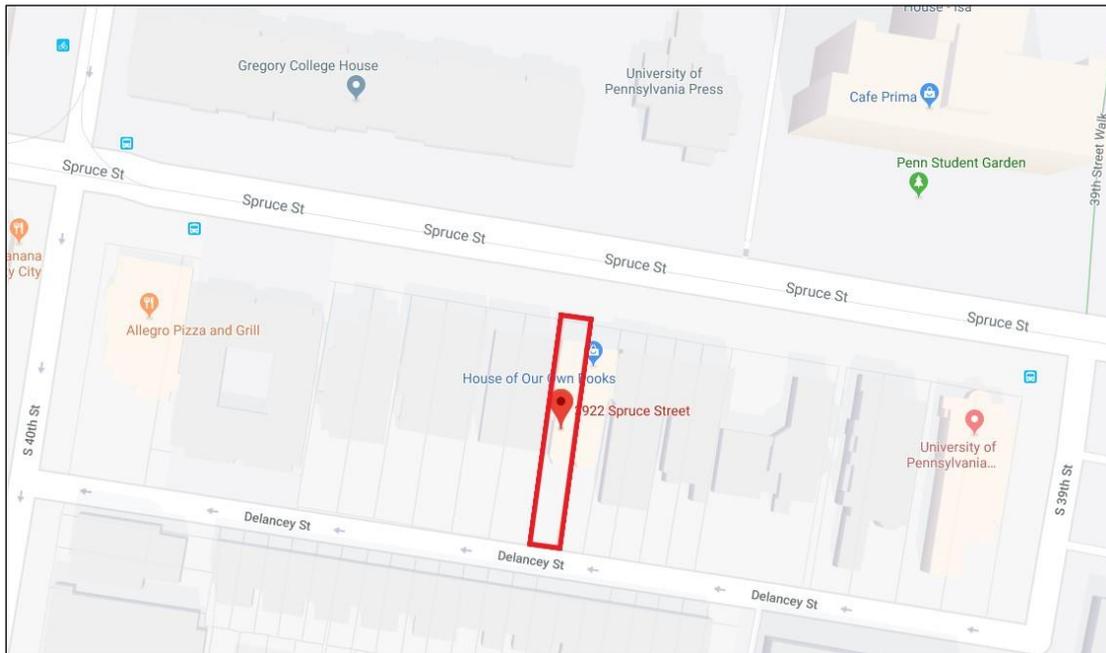
Date(s) Reviewed by the Historical Commission: 1/11/2019

Date of Final Action: 1/11/2019. Historical Commission designated on Criterion E but not Criterion A.

Designated Rejected

5. BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

All that certain lot or piece of ground with the buildings and improvements thereon erected situate on the south side of Spruce Street commencing at the distance of two hundred eighty-one feet five inches westward from the west side of 39th Street in the Twenty-Seventh Ward of the City of Philadelphia being known as 3922 Spruce Street, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Containing in front or breadth on the said Spruce Street eighteen feet nine inches and extending of that width in length or depth southward between parallel lines at right angles with the said Spruce Street one hundred forty-five feet to a certain thirty feet wide street called Robin Street (now Delancey Street).





*Front façade (north elevation) of 3922 Spruce Street.
Photograph: Allyson Mehley*

6. ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

Located on the south side of Spruce Street on the 3900 block, the property at 3922 Spruce Street was constructed in 1890 and designed by prominent Philadelphia architect, Willis Hale. 3922 Spruce Street was originally part of a row of six buildings (3912-22 Spruce Street) that were developed by William Weightman and designed by Hale. Each building had its own distinct design, materials, and massing. Today, only 3920 and 3922 Spruce Street have retained their original 1890 appearance. 3912-14 and 3916-18 Spruce Street have been significantly altered and do not reflect Hale's original design.

Hale's eclectic style is on full display at 3922 Spruce Street, as his original design survives largely intact. Although 3920 and 3922 Spruce Street are unified by their Roman brick facades, they remain distinct in their design and detailing. Individual elements are highlighted though the use of terra-cotta, cast stone, copper, and leaded glass. The overall design suggests the influence of Spanish and Middle Eastern architecture, implemented by the architect with a certain amount of playfulness.



Photograph of 3912-3922 Spruce Street. 3920 Spruce Street is the third property from the left. Constructed in 1890, the building was developed by William Weightman and designed by Willis Hale. All buildings were originally designed by Hale but 3912-14 Spruce Street and 3916-18 Spruce Street have undergone significant alteration, rendering them unrecognizable from their original design. Photograph courtesy Corey Loftus.

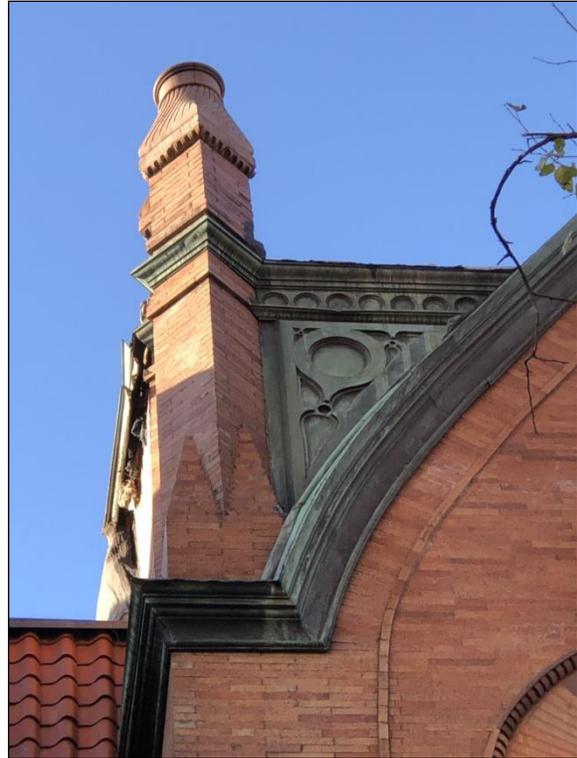
North Elevation

The property at 3922 Spruce Street features a Roman brick front façade detailed with stone, terra cotta, and copper. Presently, temporary wood columns support the porch roof (covered with a tarp). The porch roof framing appears to date from original construction. The front entry maintains its historic transom with a single lite and the original paneled front door with a large, upper lite. The front door displays historic hardware including hand-forged strap hinges. A non-historic wood storm door covers the main front door. To the right of the main entry is a large window opening with a brick segmental arch lintel and stone sill. The upper lite is leaded glass and the lower area is infilled with two double hung windows.

The second floor features a large copper-clad bay window. The bay is topped by a semi-circular balcony with a metal railing. An ogee shaped window opening highlights the third floor and encloses wood frames, multiple lites, and a door that opens on to the balcony. Terra cotta ornament adorns the façade area between the third floor and roof gable. Sculptural wreaths enclose two small windows and a crowned female figure is placed between the windows resting her arms on top of the wreaths. The roof gable is ogee shaped with a copper cornice. Decorative copper panels fill the area between the cornice and minarets that bookend the roofline.



3922 Spruce Street, front facade. Photograph: Corey Loftus.



Clockwise from the top left: 1) Decorative terra cotta and brick adorn the top of the north elevation. 2) Copper cornice and infill panels. A brick and terra cotta minaret rises from the corner of the roof line. 3) Historic front door (behind storm door) with original ornate hardware. 4) Bay window, balcony, railing, and ogee window. Photographs: Allyson Mehley



*Front/north elevation, first floor porch area.
Photograph: Allyson Mehley*

East Elevation

The east elevation shares a party wall with 3920 Spruce Street.

South Elevation

The south elevation is clad in red brick and faces Delancey Street. A small addition, clad in stucco, has been added to the rear of the first floor. The second and third floors feature a double-height bay clad in asphalt.



*Rear view of 3922 Spruce Street (through the trees). In the aerial view, 3920-22 is within the red outline.
3922 Spruce Street is on the left.*

West Elevation

A walkway separates 3922 Spruce Street from the neighboring building and extends the length of the west elevation from to the rear of the property. The elevation is clad in red brick. A row of lancet windows appear along the third floor (on the main block, close to the front of the building). Historic leaded windows appear on the first floor of the west elevation.



Clockwise from the top left: 1) View of walkway that runs along west elevation. A row of lancet windows is slightly visible along the third floor. 2) View from walkway looking north along west elevation. 3) An original leaded window on west elevation. Photographs: Allyson Mehley

7. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The property at 3922 Spruce Street constitutes a significant resource that merits designation by the Philadelphia Historical Commission and inclusion on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places. The property satisfies criteria for designation (a) and (e) as enumerated in Section 14-1004 of the Philadelphia Code. Criterion (e) precedes (a) in the following to preserve chronological order in the nomination.

(e) Is the work of a designer, architect, landscape architect or designer, or engineer whose work has significantly influenced the historical, architectural, economic, social, or cultural development of the City, Commonwealth, or Nation

The property at 3922 Spruce Street satisfies criteria for designation (e) as it reflects the work of an architect whose work has significantly influenced the historical and architectural development of Philadelphia. Architect, Willis Gaylord Hale (1848-1907), designed the building for construction in 1890. Hale was a favorite architect of the wealthy industrial chemist, William Weightman (1813-1904), who developed a number of properties in Philadelphia at the turn of the nineteenth century (including 3922 Spruce Street) and for a short period of time was the largest individual landowner in the city. Stylistically, Hale is often compared to Frank Furness for his sometimes eccentric application of the Victorian style. In his independent practice, Hale designed a number of notable buildings in Philadelphia including the Mechanics' Insurance Building (1881), the Philadelphia Record Building (1881-2) and the Union Trust Company Building (1884). Unfortunately, many of Hale's buildings have been destroyed or significantly altered since construction. The property at 3922 is a valuable example of a largely preserved Hale design in West Philadelphia.

(a) Has significant character, interest or value as part of the development, heritage, or cultural characteristics of the City, Commonwealth or Nation or is associated with the life of a person significant in the past

3922 Spruce Street satisfies criteria for designation (a) for its association with the life of Philadelphia chemist, entrepreneur, and real estate developer, William Weightman. Weightman amassed his great fortune selling quinine, a medication used to treat malaria, in addition to a number of successful investments. When he died on August 25, 1904, Weightman's death was announced in newspapers all over the United States including *The New York Times*, *The Chicago Tribune*, *The Salt Lake Tribune*, and *The Lexington Herald Ledger*, among others. *The American Journal of Pharmacy* remembered Weightman as one of America's "most prominent chemists" and also noted that "he was a man of unusual industry, eminently just in all his transactions, and held to an unusual degree the esteem and loyalty of his employees, many of whom virtually spent the greater part of their lives in his services."¹

¹ Howard B. French, "William Weightman," *The American Journal of Pharmacy*, April 1905,155.

Additional context:*Willis Gaylord Hale, Philadelphia Architect*

Willis Gaylord Hale (1848-1907), the architect of 3922 Spruce Street, is a significant Philadelphian architect whose designs and work have influenced the architectural development of the city. The musician and architect was born in New York in 1848, moving to Philadelphia in the 1860s. He was mentored by a number of important and influential architects including Frank Furness, Samuel Sloane, and John McArthur Jr.. Beginning his private practice in 1876, Hale was assured great architectural success and reach after marrying into the wealthy Weightman family.² He was a favorite architect of William Weightman and P.A.B. Widener among other prominent Philadelphians and was given a great number of commissions by these entrepreneurs in the rather competitive architectural field in late nineteenth-century Philadelphia. In addition to private residences Hale designed a number of row houses in North and West Philadelphia as well as he took on larger projects like hotels, factories, theaters and skyscrapers.

Historian Joseph J. Korom writes about Willis G. Hale's designed Philadelphia Record Building (1881, now demolished) in his book on the topic of the American skyscraper emphasizing that it represented "the aspirations of an architect who ventured beyond what was acclaimed, then, as 'good taste.'"³



Philadelphia Record Building in 1932 (917 Chestnut Street).

Photographer: Charles L. Howell.

² Sandra L. Tatman, "Hale, Willis Gaylord (1848 - 1907)," Philadelphia Architects and Buildings.

³ Joseph J. Korom, *The American Skyscraper, 1850-1940 A Celebration of Height* (Boston: Branden Books, 2008).

Furthermore, Korom praises Hale for working “in and through a well-defined range of American architectural expressions that stressed the accumulation of discordant details, colors, textures and ornament.” Specifically pertaining to the Philadelphia Record Building, its “design challenged the accepted aesthetics of a nation, a nation unaccustomed to viewing flamboyance couples with altitude that only the skyscraper could offer.” Hale’s adventurous spirit and eclectic style might be reflective of his mentor-architect, the famous Frank Furness (1839-1912).

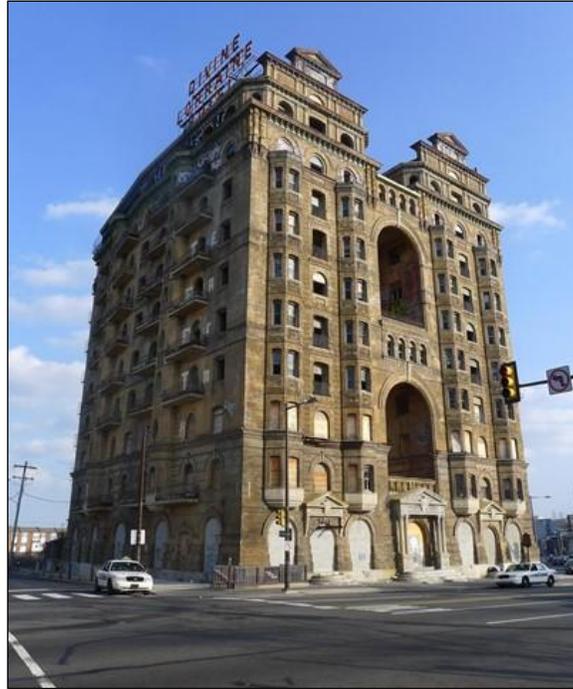
Unfortunately, many of Hale’s most recognized works are now demolished or altered. A few examples of his works in addition to the Philadelphia Record Building include the PAB Widener Mansion, the Bingham Hotel, Divine Lorraine, Boys Central High School (demolished), the Davis residence of Edward Thomas Davis on 38th and Ludlow, the Rittenhouse Hotel (demolished), Garrick Theatre on 13th and Chestnut Streets. The Divine Lorraine (1892-3) and the Garrick Theatre (1887) are some of the few surviving examples of Hale’s works. The Garrick Theatre (today known as the Hale Building), a nineteenth-century skyscraper, was also developed by William Weightman’s. In 2016, the building was rehabilitated by developer Brickstone Co. and converted to a mixed-use building with a ground-floor restaurant and co-working office space.⁴



Sketch and two photographs of Hale’s design for the Garrick Theatre on Chestnut and Juniper streets. The photos show the building in 1909 as the Garrick Theater and in 2012. Photo from Hidden City Philadelphia article, “The Late Great Hale and His Curious Buildings,” by Maria Gorshin.

⁴ Melissa Romero, "Photos: Checking in on the Hale Building's Restoration," Curbed Philly, February 06, 2018, <https://philly.curbed.com/2018/2/6/16975036/hale-building-brickstone-jkrp-restoration>.

Standing at the Corner of Broad and Fairmount Streets, the Divine Lorraine Hotel is Hale's late-Victorian design. The building is historically designated both at the local and national level. Left vacant for many years, the building reopened in 2016-2017 after an extensive rehabilitation and conversion to a mixed use building with apartments.



Divine Lorraine Hotel at Broad and Fairmount Streets during restoration, 2014. Photograph from the article "Philly's Divine Lorraine Hotel Coming Back to Life" in The Architect's Newspaper, by Henry Melcher.

In his photographic history of West Philadelphia, Robert Morris Skaler includes photographs of Hale's row houses on the northwest corner of 37th and Chestnut Streets: a row of nine houses located at the northwest corner 39th and Spruce Streets (developed by Weightman), ten houses at 38th and Locust Streets (also developed by Weightman), and two four-story twin houses with tall chimneys on Walnut Street (east of 43rd Street next to Queen Anne style twin houses by the Hewitt brothers).⁵ Hale was also one of the favored architects for the development of the Parkside-Girard neighborhood which came about only after the 1876 Philadelphia Centennial Exposition in Fairmount Park and the opening of the Girard Bridge in 1874.

Skaler writes that "Hale was known for his original designs that were very picturesque, often mixing several architectural styles in one design. Chimneys, broken rooflines, porches, balconies, and bay windows were all design devices used to give each row house individual character. He was a favorite architect of developers William Weightman and P.A.B. Widener in the 1890s. At one time, his residential designs could be found all over West and North Philadelphia. Unfortunately, as with many of Hale's designs, these rows of houses did not survive into the 21st century."⁶

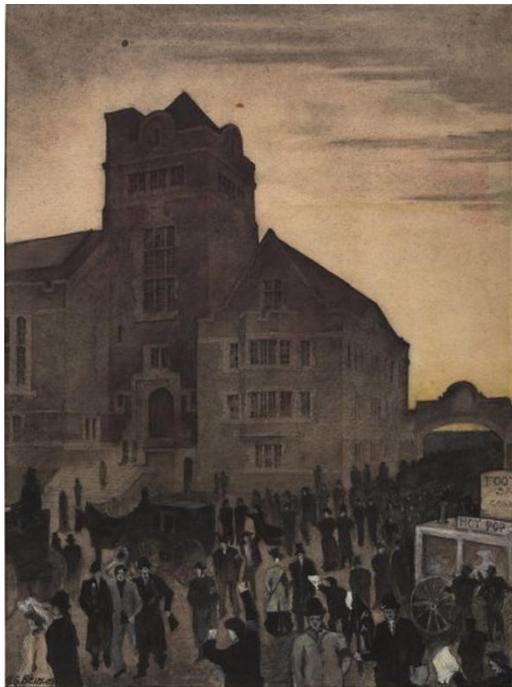
⁵ Robert Morris Skaler, *West Philadelphia, University City to 52nd Street* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia, 2002), 45.

⁶ Skaler, *West Philadelphia*, 33.

William Weightman, The Quinine King

William Weightman, the notable developer 3922 Spruce Street, developed the properties on the south side of Spruce Street in 1890. Known as the “Quinine King,” Weightman’s successful career began in the early nineteenth-century when he moved to the United States from England to work with his Uncle, John Farr, in the manufacture of quinine. When his uncle died, Weightman continued working in the chemistry and commercial pharmaceutical industries where he made a fortune. Weightman’s firm, Powers & Weightman received the prestigious Elliott Cresson gold medal from the Franklin in 1975 “for the introduction of an industry new in the United States and perfection of result in the product obtained in the manufacture of citric acid” and for “the ingenuity and skill shown in the manufacture and for the perfection of workmanship displayed in the production of the cheaper alkaloids of the cinchona barks.”⁷ In the biographical sketch of Weightman’s life in *The American Journal of Pharmacy*, the eminent chemist is repeatedly praised and recognized for not only his business success, but also for his reputable character traits including his great integrity, loyalty, devotion and honesty.

When Weightman died in 1904, his only daughter was the heir to his \$50,000,000 fortune, pharmaceutical empire, and real estate. Weightman Hall on 33rd street between Spruce and Walnut, which now houses the Athletic Department of the University of Pennsylvania, was built in his name in 1904. Although he was not born in Philadelphia, his legacy to the city and the life that he built are indisputably important to the development and character of the city.



Weightman Hall, University of Pennsylvania (A. G. Bein (Arthur Byne, 1883-1935), Delineator, 1905), Frank Miles Day Collection, Architectural Archives, University of Pennsylvania.

https://www.philadelphiabuildings.org/pab/app/pj_display.cfm/10666

⁷ French, "William Weightman," 154.

8. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHIC REFERENCES

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