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\*NRHP Status Code: 3CD

\*Resource Name or # (Assigned by recorder): 1644-1670 Pine Street

D1. Historic Name: Pine Street Auto Shops Historic District

D2. Common Name: same

**\*D3. Detailed Description** (Discuss overall coherence of the district, its setting, visual characteristics, and minor features. List all elements of district.):

This potential historic district consists of five small light industrial buildings at 1644-1670 Pine Street, each of which was built during the 1910s for purposes of automobiles service and sales. The five buildings are adjacent to each other and have a combined width of about 190 feet along Pine Street; the depth of each building is 137'-6". The narrowest building is 27 feet in width and the widest is about 50 feet. All of the buildings are one or two stories in height. Four are brick masonry in construction and are faced in brick, while the fifth (#1644) is made of reinforced concrete and has a coating of stucco. (continued, p.2)

**\*D4. Boundary Description** (Describe limits of district and attach map showing boundary and district elements.):

This district comprises five adjacent buildings in city block #647, on lots numbered 7 through 11. The buildings are located on the north side of Pine Street, 125'6" west of Van Ness Avenue and 55' east of Franklin Street. Except for a minor notch in the rear, the five lots each run to a depth of 137'-6". (See sketch map on page 7.)

**\*D5. Boundary Justification:**

These boundaries were selected because the five buildings are contiguous; all were built during the same decade (within five years of each other during the 1910s); all have similar, automobile-related histories; and they are separated by a substantial distance from other buildings of similar type, history, and age. The closest auto-related building on Pine Street to these five, at #1700-1710, is separated from this group by an empty lot and by Franklin Street; is much larger than any of these five; and was built a decade later (1920s). For purposes of coherence, it seemed best to exclude it from this district, and to evaluate it separately.

Another auto-related building, at 1765 California, is adjacent to these five in that it shares a rear lot line with them. It was built in the 1920s and is much larger in scale. It also seemed best to exclude this building and to evaluate it separately.

**\*D6. Significance: Theme:** automobile industry

**Area:** San Francisco

**Period of Significance:** 1912-1933

**Applicable Criteria:** 1, 3

(Discuss district's importance in terms of its historical context as defined by theme, period of significance, and geographic scope. Also address the integrity of the district as a whole.)

### **History of automobile-related buildings in the study area**

The automobile industry in San Francisco began in about 1900, when the first businesses specializing in the sale of automobiles were founded. By 1906 numerous auto showrooms, and a few garages and repair shops, had been established in the city; all but a few of these, however, were destroyed in the earthquake and fire of 1906. (continued, p. 2)

**\*D7. References** (Give full citations including the names and addresses of any informants, where possible.):

Original building permits for each of these five buildings.

Crocker-Langley and Polk's city directory, and PT&T reverse directory listings for occupants of these buildings, 1913-1964.

Please see DPR 523 forms the individual buildings for further references.

**\*D8. Evaluator:** William Kostura

**Date:** April 2010

**Address:** P. O. Box 60211, Palo Alto, CA 94306

**\*D3. Detailed Description** (continued)

In style, four of the buildings are Classical Revival in their ornament and detailing. Each of these four employs a classical cornice, horizontal moldings, and a frieze that stretches across the façade. One (#1660) possesses decorative brickwork; one (#1670) has decorative brackets supporting the cornice; two (#1660 and #1670) have classically-styled ornament of plaster or terra cotta; one (#1644) has supporting piers that are expressed as classical pilasters; and one (#1670) has large, arched windows with classical keys. Two or three of the buildings (#1644, #1650, and perhaps #1670) have original windows with multiple lights that are divided by muntins or mullions, while another (#1660) retains windows with original wooden sash.

The other building in this row (#1656) is virtually bare of ornament, and is essentially industrial in character. It has a stepped parapet, a recessed panel in the frieze area, and a minimalist cornice or belt course composed of two courses of brick.

Only two of the five buildings (#1644 and #1650) still have vehicle entrances. A third building (#1670) has a large central opening that is now devoted to pedestrian entrance but was undoubtedly originally devoted to vehicles. The other two buildings (#1656 and #1660) appear to have had their vehicle entrances remodeled in the 1930s, after they passed from automotive to other uses.



View of 1644-1670 Pine Street, looking northwest. #1644 is at far right.

**\*D6. Significance: (continued)**

The industry quickly rebounded after the fire. During the years 1906-1911 auto showrooms and related buildings were concentrated on Golden Gate Avenue, between Larkin and Gough streets. After 1911, however, new auto showrooms were built principally on Van Ness Avenue, replacing the temporary wooden commercial buildings that had lined the Avenue during the first few years after the earthquake and fire.

These new showrooms were often rather large or imposing. Besides containing rooms for the display of cars, they typically held shops for auto repair, service, and painting; parts stores; auto storerooms; and offices for the sales managers. In addition, a large percentage of auto dealerships on Van Ness also served as distributorships for northern California, and sometimes as distributorships for the entire state plus other western states. San Francisco's "Auto Row," as it was called from the beginning, was one of the centers of the auto industry for the western United States.

The showrooms that were built on Van Ness became a magnet for numerous ancillary or supporting buildings, such as public garages, auto repair shops, auto supplies and parts stores, tire shops, battery shops, and related specialty services. A few of these were also built on Van Ness, but the great majority were

located on side streets and parallel streets within a block or two of Van Ness. Construction of such buildings began almost simultaneously with the arrival of the big auto showrooms, and continued through the 1920s. By the end of that decade well over two hundred auto-related buildings could be found on or near Van Ness Avenue, from Market Street on the south to Pacific Avenue on the north.

Today, only about one-half of all of the automobile-related buildings that were ever built in the Van Ness Avenue corridor still stand, and many of these have been altered so that their integrity is now poor. The survivors with good integrity represent the early years of the auto industry in the city.

### **History of the buildings at 1644-1670 Pine Street**

Each of these five buildings has been recorded separately on State of California DPR 523 A and B forms. Their shared history is summarized here, and some particulars of each building's history are also listed.

Because so many auto-related buildings have been demolished since the 1950s, the surviving auto-related buildings are, for the most part, scattered. The only place where more than two auto-related buildings from the 1910s still stand adjacent to each other is at 1644-1670 Pine Street, where five such buildings still stand in a row.

One of them (#1670) was an auto showroom for five years; another was, very briefly, a used car sales room. Aside from these two commercial uses, all of these buildings were occupied by light industrial shops devoted to the repair and service of automobiles from the 1910s into at least the 1930s. Tire shops and auto repair shops were the most frequent occupants. Others included a battery shop, a fender and radiator shop, an auto tops and trimming shop, a wheel alignment shop, and a shop for light auto maintenance.

Individually, some of these five buildings represent the history of the auto industry better than others do. One of them had auto-related uses for only 16 years before converting to other uses; another, for 19 years. The others had auto-related uses for 25, 31, and 51 years (counting only through 1964, the end year of this study). The average number of years of auto-related use (through 1964) was 28.

The history of each of these buildings is summarized below:

#### 1644 Pine

Year built: 1912-1913

Architect: Albert J. Bain

Style: Classical Revival

Construction type: reinforced concrete

Façade cladding: stucco

**CONTINUATION SHEET**

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Resource Identifier: 1644-1670 Pine Street

Recorded by William Kostura

\*Date April 2010

Continuation  Update

Auto-related uses: tire shop (Michelin) and auto repair shops  
Period of auto-related uses: 1913-1964+  
Total number of years of auto-related use: 51  
Integrity: high

1650 Pine

Year built: 1917  
Architects: Heiman and Schwartz  
Style: Classical Revival  
Construction type: brick masonry  
Façade cladding: brick  
Auto-related uses: tire, light auto maintenance, and auto repair shops  
Period of auto-related uses: 1917-1942  
Total number of years of auto-related use: 25  
Integrity: good to high

1656 Pine

Year built: 1917  
Architect: unknown or none  
Style: Early 20<sup>th</sup> century industrial  
Construction type: brick masonry  
Façade cladding: brick  
Auto-related uses: auto repair, fender and radiator, and auto tops and trimming shops  
Period of auto-related uses: 1917-1933  
Total number of years of auto-related use: 16  
Integrity: fair to good

1660 Pine

Year built: 1917  
Architects: Heiman and Schwartz  
Style: Classical Revival  
Construction type: brick masonry  
Façade cladding: brick  
Auto-related uses: battery, piston rings, and tire shops; used car sales  
Subsequent auto-related uses: 1917-1936  
Total number of years of auto-related use: 19  
Integrity: good

1670 Pine

Year built: 1917  
Architects: Heiman and Schwartz  
Style: Classical Revival  
Construction type: brick masonry  
Façade cladding: brick  
Auto-related uses: auto showroom (Ford); auto repair, tire, and wheel alignment shops  
Period of auto-related uses: 1917-1940, 1951-1964  
Total number of years of auto-related use: 31  
Integrity: good

In their time, these must have been considered to be unremarkable buildings, just five of many such utilitarian structures in the vicinity. Although care of composition and fine detailing were devoted to most of these five, the same could be said of most buildings of their class during the 1910s. Their principle use as auto repair and service shops was probably little noticed compared to the large auto showrooms, where national brands of automobiles were sold.

Nevertheless, auto-related buildings that date to the 1910s and retain good integrity have become somewhat scarce, and nowhere else in the study area can one find more than two intact auto-related buildings of this age in a row.

### Architects at 1644-1670 Pine Street

Three of these buildings, #1650, #1660, and #1670, were built in 1917 for the same owner, L. A. Myers, and were designed for him by the same architectural firm, that of Heiman and Schwartz.

After each had worked as draftsmen, Samuel Heiman and Mel I. Schwartz formed a partnership that lasted from 1914-1919. Together they designed small commercial buildings, such as these three on Pine Street, and Mediterranean-styled houses in Forest Hill and St. Francis Wood. After 1919 they each worked independently, Heiman into the 1940s and Schwartz to 1930. Heiman had the more prominent career, designing many commercial and industrial buildings, some of which were large; institutional buildings; fine residences; apartment buildings; and the Health Department building at 101 Grove Street (1930-1931). Schwartz designed little on his own, but two of his houses are exceptional. They are an English

Renaissance house at 2112 Lake (1929) and a more ornate Baroque house at 2151 Sacramento (1921), built for Dr. Albert Abrams. It is one of the finest small houses in the city.

Their buildings at 1650, 1660, and 1670 Pine are all in the Classical Revival style, but they differ somewhat from each other in general treatment. At #1650 the cornice is the single bold architectural element; the rest of this modest building, though possessing some fine detailing, is subordinate to this feature. #1660 also has a prominent cornice, but has, as well, a belt of ornament in the frieze area and decorative brickwork in a herringbone pattern. #1670 is the most elaborate of the three. It has a gabled, squeezed parapet, a cornice supported by brackets, tall arched window openings, and classical ornament made of terra cotta or plaster.

The architect of 1644 Pine, Albert J. Bain, was quite obscure; no other building by him is known. 1656 Pine, as far as is known, had no architect.

### Integrity

1656 Pine has only fair to good integrity for the period through 1933, when it was devoted to auto uses. If further permit history research shows that its interior zone was remodeled in the 1930s for other uses (as seems likely), then the building could be considered to have good integrity for the period 1930s-1964. Each of the other buildings in this row has, individually, good to high integrity.

The row as a whole has good to high integrity, for there are few places in San Francisco, and none in the Van Ness Avenue corridor, where as many commercial or industrial buildings of this age still stand with as few alterations as this row has undergone. In sum, this row of five buildings, considered as a potential historic district, retains integrity of location, design, materials, workmanship, setting, feeling, and association.



## Evaluation

### Criterion 1

This row of five is quite remarkable for its early date and high integrity, and evokes the early history of the automobile industry in San Francisco as no other group of buildings can. For these reasons, this group of buildings appears to form a potential historic district, one that is eligible for the California Register at the local level under Criterion 1, for its collective automobile-related uses. Each of the five buildings is a contributor to this district. The Period of Significance for this potential district is 1917-1933, the years that all five of the buildings in this district had auto-related uses at the same time.

### Criterion 2

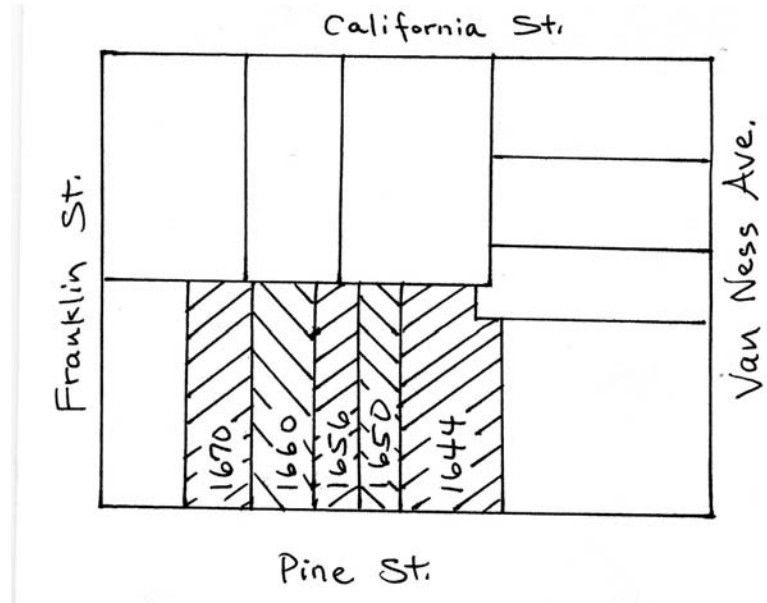
No individual person of historical importance was associated with this group of buildings. L. A. Myers comes closest, but the most that can be said of him is that he was a moderately prolific developer in San Francisco. He seems to have had little to do with this row besides building three of its buildings. Thus, this potential historic district does not appear to be eligible for the California Register under Criterion 2.

### Criterion 3

Four of these five buildings possess fine details or ornament, were clearly designed with care, and retain good to high integrity. These include 1644, 1650, 1660, and 1670 Pine Street. Three of them, #s 1650, 1660, and 1670, were designed by the firm of Heiman and Schwartz, whose principles, Samuel Heiman and Mel I Schwartz (especially the former), designed many fine buildings in San Francisco. Because of the pleasing features in these four buildings, this row appears to be eligible for the California Register at the local level as a potential historic district under Criterion 3, for their design. The Period of Significance for this district is 1912-1913 and 1917, the years of design and construction. All four of these buildings are contributors to this district. The fifth building, 1656 Pine, is not a contributor to the district.



Detail of 1670 Pine Street



Sketch map showing the buildings in this potential historic district