State of California — The Resources Agency
DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION

PRIMARY RECORD

Primary # _____
HRI # _____
Trinomial _____
NRHP Status Code 3CS
Other Listings _____
Review Code _____ Reviewer _____ Date _____

 *Resource Name or #: (Assigned by recorder) 1700-1710 Pine Street

P1. Historic name of building (if any): Kern Garage
P2. Location: *a: County San Francisco ☐ Not for Publication ■ Unrestricted
*b. USGS 7.5' Quad _____ Date _____ T ___; R ___; ____¼ of ____¼ of Sec ____; _____B.M.
c. Address 1700-1710 Pine Street City San Francisco Zip 94109
d. UTM: Zone _____; _____mE/ _____ mN *e. Assessor's parcel #: Block 648, lot 4

*P3a. Description: (Describe resource and its major elements. Include design, materials, condition, alterations, size, setting, and boundaries)

This two-story, stucco-clad, reinforced building fully occupies its lot at the northwest corner of Pine and Franklin streets, and measures 110 feet along Pine by 68'-9" on Franklin. At the top of the building a shallow, pitched roof structure, similar to abbreviated mansard roofs (aka French caps), projects beyond the wall plane and wraps around both facades. It is supported by molded brackets. Immediately below, at the top of the walls, is a frieze filled by panels of classically-styled plaster ornament.

(See Continuation Sheet, page 2.)

*P3b Resource Attributes: HP8 – industrial building

*P4. Resources Present: ■ Building ☐ Structure ☐ Object ☐ Site ☐ District ☐ Element of District ☐ Other

P5b. Description of Photo: (View, date, accession #)
View looking west at Franklin St. façade, June 2009

*P6. Date Constructed/Age and Source: ■ Historic ☐ Prehistoric ☐ Both
1925; building permit

*P7. Owner and Address:
KERN, REUBEN W
3201 PLUMAS ST #257
RENO NV 89501

*P8. Recorded by: (Name, affiliation, and address)
William Kostura
P. O. Box 60211
Palo Alto, CA 94306

*P9. Date Recorded: December 2009

*P10. Survey Type: (Describe) intensive

P11. Report Citation*: (Cite survey report.) William Kostura. *Van Ness Auto Row Support Structures*. San Francisco Department of City Planning, 2010.

*Attachments: ☐ NONE ☐ Location Map ☐ Sketch Map ■ Continuation Sheet ■ Building, Structure and Object Record ☐ Archaeological Record ☐ District Record ☐ Linear Feature Record ☐ Milling Station Record ☐ Rock Art Record ☐ Artifact Record ☐ Photograph Record ☐ Other (List)

Description (continued)

In composition, the Franklin Street façade is divided into four bays of equal width, while the Pine Street façade is divided into five bays. These bays are divided, or defined, by piers that project very slightly beyond the wall plane. A shield and suspended swag decorates the top of each pier. Spandrels at the second floor level take the form of rectangular panels with three levels of recess. Where openings for vehicle entrances exist in the first story, these spandrels are supported by curved brackets. All window openings are filled by industrial steel sash windows. In the Pine Street façade, these windows are divided into two parts by plain, narrow piers. Except for roll-up metal vehicle entrance doors, all of the above elements appear to be original.

Perspective view, looking northwest

BUILDING, STRUCTURE, AND OBJECT RECORD

***NRHP Status Code** 3CS

***Resource Name or #** (Assigned by recorder) 1700-1710 Pine Street

B1. Historic Name: Kern Garage

B2. Common Name:

B3. Original Use: public garage B4. Present Use: garage and auto repair

***B5. Architectural Style:** Classical Revival

***B6. Construction History:** (Construction date, alterations, and date of alterations)
Built in 1925.

***B7. Moved?** ■ No ☐ Yes ☐ Unknown **Date:** _____ **Original Location:** _____

***B8. Related Features:**
none

B9a. Architect: O'Brien Brothers b. Builder: Industrial Construction Co.

***B10. Significance: Theme** automobile industry **Area** San Francisco
Period of Significance 1925-1958 **Property Type** public garage **Applicable Criteria** 1, 3
(Discuss importance in terms of historical or architectural context as defined by theme, period, and geographic scope. Also address integrity.)

History -- Introduction

This building was built in 1925 as a public garage for owner Reuben W. Kern, to designs by the O'Brien Brothers, architects. This firm designed many auto showrooms and public garages in San Francisco, and is profiled below.

The architects, O'Brien Brothers

O'Brien Brothers consisted of Walter J., Albert L. and Arthur T. O'Brien, and practiced in San Francisco from 1907 through 1935. In 1925, after the deaths of his brothers, Walter J. O'Brien began working with Wilbur D. Peugh; the firm ultimately became known as "O'Brien Brothers and Wilbur D. Peugh."

(See Continuation Sheet, page 4.)

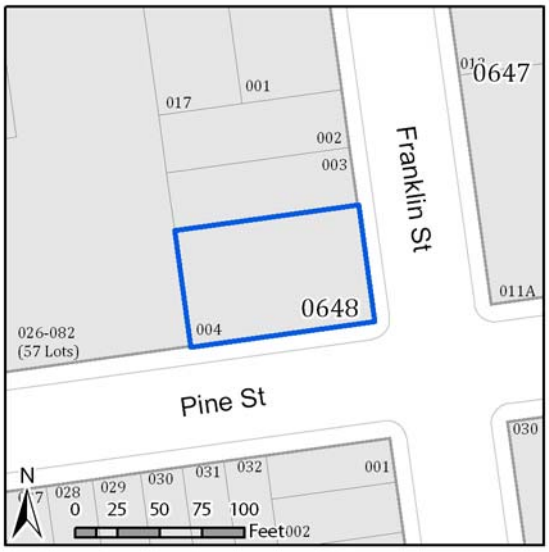
B11. Additional Resource Attributes: (List attributes and codes)

***B12. References:**
Building permit #35432 (Feb. 17, 1925)
Crocker-Langley and Polk's city directory, and PT&T reverse directory listings for occupants of this building, 1924-1964
1936 Sanborn insurance map (capacity = 120 cars; address was 1601 Franklin/1732 Pine)

B13. Remarks:

***B14. Evaluator:** William Kostura
Date of Evaluation: December 2009

(Sketch map with north arrow required)



(This space reserved for official comments.)

The architects, O'Brien Brothers (continued)

O'Brien Brothers had a diversified practice of designing commercial buildings, industrial buildings, apartment buildings, and residences. Auto related buildings were only a small percentage of their overall output, but it might be accurate to say that they made a specialty of designing this building type. O'Brien Brothers, in fact, may have designed more buildings for the automobile industry than did any other San Francisco architectural firm. Outside of the study area, their outstanding building of this type is the Palace Garage, at 111-127 Stevenson Street (1921). Other fine garage buildings by them include 1419 Pacific Avenue (1913-1914), 525 Jones Street (1922), and 640 O'Farrell Street (1924).

Within the study area, O'Brien Brothers designed two auto showrooms, at 1601 Van Ness (1912-1913; demolished) and 1600-1630 Van Ness (1913; partially altered), plus several public garages. The best of the garages is the Jackson Garage at 1641 Jackson (1914); others include 1660 Pacific (1921), the Grand Central Garage at 66 Page (1924), and the Kern Garage at 1700 Pine (1925).

These buildings were designed in prevailing styles such as Classical Revival and Tudor Revival that were adapted to automotive needs. Wide expanses of industrial steel sash windows allowed generous amounts of light for automotive work and gave these buildings a functional or industrial feeling that was enlivened by the historical ornament.

Several of O'Brien Brothers' auto-related buildings are known to have been demolished or heavily altered. These include 401-425 Fourth Street (1912), 1360 Eddy Street (1921), 626-628 Golden Gate Avenue (1925-1926), and 140 Hayes Street (1928). Others may yet come to light.

To recapitulate, approximately ten of O'Brien Brothers' buildings for the automobile industry are known to still stand. Eight have high integrity, one lost its original window sash and doors but is otherwise fairly intact, and one has been altered more severely.

History – Occupants

The first owner, Reuben W. Kern, built this garage for his own use in 1925. This was unusual in that proprietors of public garages typically leased buildings for their business use; it was very rare for garage proprietors to build and own their own buildings. Kern naturally named this garage after himself, and it remained known as the Kern Garage for 33 years, through 1958. This garage had a capacity of 120 automobiles (according to the 1936 Sanborn map), making it one of the largest garages in the study area.

Kern remained the proprietor only through 1929, before leasing it out to others. He later assumed the proprietorship for several years in the 1930s-1940s. Known proprietors over the years were:

1925-1929: Robert W. Kern
1936-1943: Robert W. Kern
1951: J. E. Hunsicker
1930-1935: William A. Smith
1944-1945: K. J. MacKenzie
1955: Olin C. Biddison and Henderson Reed

Later, from 1959 to at least 1964, this building became the used car salesroom of John E. Goggin, known as the AutoMart.

History -- Context

Twelve buildings in the study area, including 1700-1710 Pine Street, have held a public garage for longer than twenty years (through 1964, the end year of the period of time being studied). They include:

> 1361 Bush (38 years), 1700-1710 Pine (33 years), 1745 Clay (33 years), 1641 Jackson (31 years), 1267 Bush (28 years), 1461 Pine (28 years), 1725 Sacramento (25+ years), 731-799 Van Ness (24 years), 550 Turk (23+ years), 730 Ellis (23 years), 2020-2034 Van Ness (22 years), and 1335 Larkin (21 years).

Among these buildings, seven stand out as having the best integrity: 1700-1710 Pine, 1641 Jackson, 1725 Sacramento, 731-799 Van Ness, 550 Turk, 2020-2034 Van Ness, and 1335 Larkin. The building with the greatest longevity as a garage, 1361 Bush, has the poorest integrity. If one uses longevity and integrity as standards, then 1700-1710 Pine Street could be considered the best public garage in the study area. This building also had one of the largest capacities of any garage in the study area.

Integrity

Save for the loss of original vehicle entrance doors – a near-universal condition in the study area – no alterations to the exterior are known to have occurred. This building retains integrity of location, design, materials, workmanship, setting, feeling, and association.

Evaluation

This is one of more than 100 buildings along the Van Ness Avenue corridor that have a history as automobile support structures, and that are being evaluated for possible historic significance according to the criteria of the California Register of Historical Resources. With a few exceptions, these buildings were auto showrooms, public garages, auto repair shops, auto parts and supplies stores, and auto painting shops. The time period that is being studied is from the initial years of the automobile industry in San Francisco through 1964. Among the factors that have been considered when evaluating a building are its date of construction, its longevity of auto-related use, the importance of its occupants in local auto industry history, integrity, and architectural quality. These factors, and how they apply to evaluations of buildings, are discussed in a cover report, *Van Ness Auto Row Support Structures, 1908-1964.*

Completed in 1925, this is a moderately early example of a public garage. With 33 years of such use in its history, it has excellent longevity in this use. In addition, this is clearly one of the best examples of a public garage in the study area, due to its longevity, integrity, and capacity. For these reasons, the building appears to be eligible for the California Register of Historical Resources under Criterion 1, at the local level, for its use as a public garage. The Period of Significance under this criterion is 1925-1958, the years the building had this use.

Not withstanding the unusual circumstance of Reuben Kern's ownership of his own public garage building, he does not stand out as important in his field. Accordingly, this building does not appear to be eligible for the California Register under Criterion 2.

(Continued next page.)

Evaluation (continued)

Architecturally, this building is not as striking as some other public garages in the study area, most notably 1641 Jackson, 1725 Sacramento, and 1745 Clay Street. It is also less striking than other garages by the O'Brien Brothers in San Francisco, particularly the Palace Garage at 111-127 Stevenson and 525 Jones Street. A few other garages that survive in the study area and/or were designed by the O'Brien Brothers are on roughly the same level as this building (e.g. 66 Page, 550 Turk, and 1565 Bush). On balance, this garage rises to a level of significance because of its design quality and for its very high integrity; only a small number of public garages in the city retain virtually all of their original steel sash windows, as this building does. For these reasons this building does appear to be eligible for the California Register under Criterion 3. The Period of Significance under this criterion is 1925, the year of construction.

Character defining features

The character defining features of this building are its height and width, the stucco surface, its projecting roof and brackets, the plaster ornament in the frieze and piers, the paneled spandrels, the brackets at the top of the vehicle entrance openings, and the industrial steel sash windows.