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) 845 Polk Street

P1. Historic name of building (if any): John Blasauf auto repair shop
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 Location: *a: County San Francisco ☐ Not for Publication ■ Unrestricted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 845 Polk Street City San Francisco Zip 94109
d. UTM: Zone _____; _____mE/ _____ mN *e. Assessor's parcel #: Block 718, lot 2

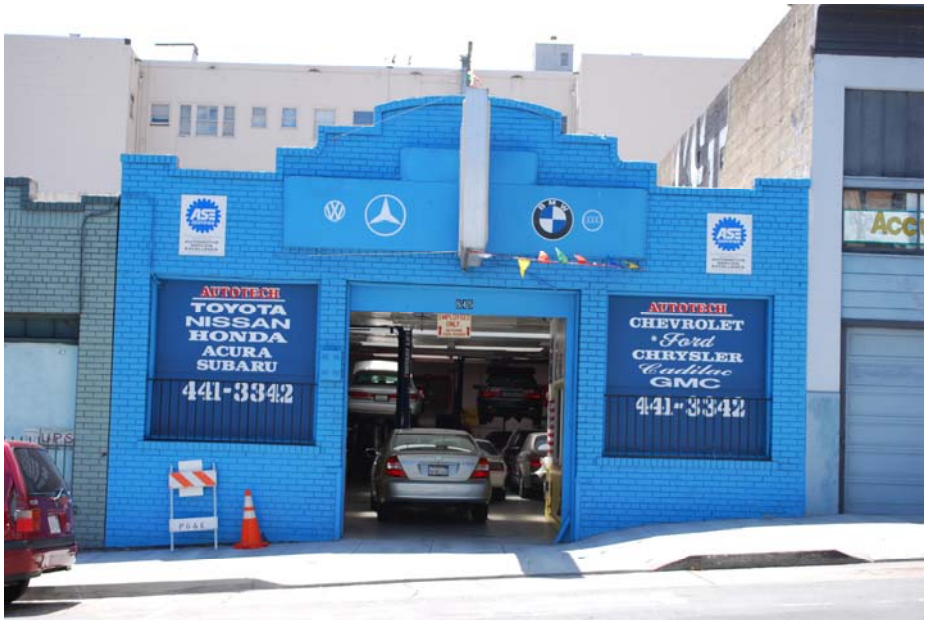
*P3a. Description: (Describe resource and its major elements. Include design, materials, condition, alterations, size, setting, and boundaries)

This is a one-story, brick masonry auto repair shop that fills its 30' wide by 97'-6" deep lot. Immediately adjacent to the south is another, and very similar, brick auto repair shop that was built at about the same time as this one. The two buildings make a visual pair.

This building is faced in brick that has been painted blue. In composition, the façade is symmetrical and divided into three bays, with a centrally-placed vehicle entrance flanked by windows. The window openings retain their original dimensions and have brick sills, but have been filled in with plywood.

The facade is crowned by a Mission Revival-style parapet that has slightly projecting headers lining the top. The frieze area of the parapet is devoted largely to sheet metal and interior-lit signs.

*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
June 2009

*P6. Date Constructed/Age and Source: ■ Historic ☐ Prehistoric ☐ Both
1919-1920; building permit

*P7. Owner and Address:
DAKE FAMILY REVOC INTV TR
546 SYLVAN AVE
SAN MATEO CA 94403

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

*P9. Date Recorded: September 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)

BUILDING, STRUCTURE, AND OBJECT RECORD

***NRHP Status Code** 3CS

***Resource Name or #** (Assigned by recorder) 845 Polk Street

B1. Historic Name: John Blasauf auto repair shop
B2. Common Name: _____
B3. Original Use: auto repair B4. Present Use: auto repair
***B5. Architectural Style:** Mission Revival
***B6. Construction History:** (Construction date, alterations, and date of alterations)
Built in 1919-1920.
***B7. Moved?** ■ No ☐ Yes ☐ Unknown **Date:** _____ **Original Location:** _____
***B8. Related Features:** none

B9a. Architect: C. O. Clausen b. Builder: J. G. Kincannon
***B10. Significance: Theme** automobile industry **Area** San Francisco
Period of Significance 1920-1964 **Property Type** auto repair shop **Applicable Criteria** 1
(Discuss importance in terms of historical or architectural context as defined by theme, period, and geographic scope. Also address integrity.)

History

This auto repair shop was built in 1919-1920 to designs by architect C. O. Clausen, as an investment for owner Louis D. Stoff, who made his living in real estate. It was built almost concurrently with a very similar shop building adjacent to the south (843 Polk), which had the same owner and architect.

This building was occupied almost continuously by automobile repair shops from the time of its completion through 1964, and continues in this use today. The first proprietor, from 1920-1927, was John Blausauf, who had previously owned a machine shop at 81 City Hall Avenue in 1905 and an auto repair shop at the same site during 1906-1919. He must have been one of the earliest auto repair shop owners in San Francisco's history.

After Blausauf, subsequent auto repair shops in this building and their proprietors included Henry L. Schweining, who called his repair shop and garage the Polk Street Auto Service Company (1928-1931); Walter Geske (1935); the Automotive Reconstruction Company (three brief ownerships during 1938-1943); and, the longest lived, James Impeartrice, who called his shop Scientific Motor Tune-Up (1945-1960). That shop was followed by A&E Motors (1961) and F&G Imported Car Service (1964).

In all, auto repair shops occupied this building for 38 years (through 1964, the end of the period being studied).

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

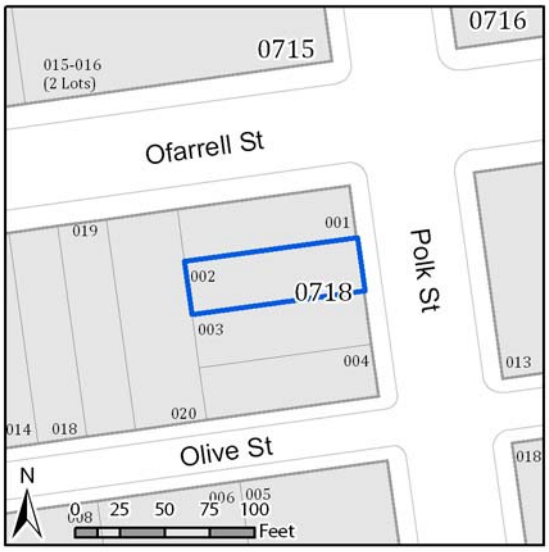
***B12. References:**
Building permit #90049 (December 9, 1919), at S. F. Building Inspection Dept., 1660 Mission Street
Crocker-Langley and Polk's city directory, and PT&T reverse directory listings for occupants of this building, 1920-1964
1929 and 1948 Sanborn maps ("auto repair")

B13. Remarks:

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

(This space reserved for official comments.)

(Sketch map with north arrow required)



History -- Context

This section examines the subject of auto repair shops that are found within the study area of this report. This category is considered as including shops that performed general auto repair and body rebuilding. It does not include specialty service shops such as electrical, batteries, brakes, tires, auto tops and trimming, fender, and radiator shops, as those are considered separate categories.

As an building type that illustrates the early automobile-related history of the study area, auto repair shops are less important than auto showrooms, public garages, and multiple-use buildings; they are of roughly equal importance compared to auto supplies stores and tires shops, and are more important than most specialty shops and used car sales rooms. They were once very numerous in the study area, far more so than in any other San Francisco neighborhood.

Auto repair shops were first listed in San Francisco city directories in 1904-1905. They were located at 307-309 Larkin Street and at Golden Gate and Gough, both within the study area of this report. During the period 1908-1929, from 32% to 53% of all auto repair shops in San Francisco were located within the study area. This was a far greater percentage than could be found elsewhere in the city (for example, in South-of-Market, where from 8% to 15% of auto repair shops were located during these years). By 1929, the number of auto repair shops in the study area had risen to 93.

Today, there are over 40 surviving buildings in the study area that were occupied by auto repair shops for at least seven years of their history (through 1964, the end year of the period being studied). Of these forty-plus buildings, some are better examples of this building type than are others. The best examples are: the oldest ones; those with the greatest longevity as auto repair shops; and those with the highest integrity. The largest auto repair shops, i.e. those with the greatest capacity, could also be considered as better examples than smaller ones, because presumably more autos were repaired in them; but smaller repair shops can still have significance, for they were once very numerous, were a common part of the landscape, but have now become scarce. The best examples of auto repair shops include:

<u>The oldest examples, with good or excellent longevity</u>

Four buildings held auto repair shops beginning in the 1910s, for periods of over 20 years (counting through the year 1964), and have at least good integrity. They qualify as the oldest good examples of auto repair shops in the study area:

155 Grove Street. Harry M. Nicolson's shop. This is the oldest building in the study area that was built (in 1915) as an auto repair shop. Integrity is good.

731-799 Van Ness Avenue. Auto repair use beginning in 1917, for 28 years. Integrity is high. This was a large multi-use building; it held a public garage and an auto painting shop in addition to an auto repair shop.

1465 Pine Street. Auto repair use beginning in 1917, for at least 30 years; a small shop. Integrity is good.

1644 Pine Street. Auto repair use beginning in 1918, for 46 years. Integrity is high.

(Continued next page.)

History – Context (continued)

The next-oldest examples, with excellent longevity

Seven buildings held auto repair shops beginning in the 1920s, had over 30 years of such use (counting through 1964), and retain high integrity. These are exceptional examples of this building type, even though they are not as old as those dating to the 1910s. Three of these are small, but are still good examples due to their moderately early date, excellent longevity, and high integrity. The seven include:

300 Grove Street. Built in 1920, it held auto repair shops for 38 years. The brick façade is exceptional, and almost all of the wooden windows remain in place.

650 Polk Street. Built in 1920, it held auto repair shops for 40 years. This is a small building on the scale of 1465 Pine, 843 Polk, and 845 Polk.

843 Polk Street. Built in 1920, it held auto repair shops for 44 years. This is a small building on the scale of 1465 Pine, 650 Polk, and 845 Polk.

845 Polk Street (the building being evaluated here). Built in 1920, it held auto repair shops for 38 years, including that of John Blausef, active in this work since 1905. This is a small building on the scale of 1465 Pine, 650 Polk, and 843 Polk.

824 Ellis Street. Auto repair use beginning in 1920, for 35 years. This was one of the larger and more architecturally distinguished auto repair shops in the study area.

1765 California Street. Hanni and Girerd's shop. Auto repair use beginning in 1921, for 43 years. This was the largest auto repair shop in the study area.

55 Oak Street. Earl E. Robbins' shop. Auto repair use beginning in 1929, for 35 years.

Other auto repair shop buildings in the study area are of interest in other ways. They include:

1415 Van Ness Avenue. This is the earliest auto repair shop building in the study area. It was not built for such use, however, but rather as a clothing store, in 1906. Eugene S. Miner's auto repair shop was here during 1910-1916. Auto showrooms were here afterward.

1575-1595 Bush. This building held multiple auto-related uses, including repair shops, upon it completion in 1923.

550 Turk Street. Built as a garage, this building also held an auto repair shop for 21 years.

1540 Bush Street. This was built as a battery shop. Eugene S. Miner's auto repair shop was here 1927-1941.

1522-1524 Bush Street. Built as an auto supplies store, this building held an auto repair shop for 34 years beginning in 1931.

730 Ellis Street. After long use as a garage, this held an auto repair shop for 29 years beginning in 1936.

Integrity

Save for the signage, paint, and the use of plywood over the window openings, the façade of this building is unchanged since the time of construction. The building thus 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 1920, this is a moderately early example of an automobile repair shop. With at least 38 years of such use in its history (through 1964), it has excellent longevity in this use. Its small size or capacity is outweighed by its date of construction, longevity, and high integrity. In sum, it is one of the 17 best examples of an auto repair shop in the study area, among more than forty that still stand; and is one of the eleven best among all buildings that were originally built as auto repair shops. 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 an automobile repair shop. The Period of Significance under this criterion is 1920-1964.

The first proprietor of an auto repair shop in this building, John Blausauf, was one of the very early automobile repairmen in San Francisco's history. However, his presence in this building was fairly brief (seven years), and began only in 1920. Subsequent auto repair shop owners in this building lack individual importance. Accordingly, this building does not appear to be eligible for the California Register under Criterion 2.

Architecturally, this building has a pleasing parapet, but is otherwise modest, and thus this building does not appear to be eligible for the California Register under Criterion 3.

Character defining features

The character defining features of this building are its height and width, the dimensions of the window and entrance openings, the brickwork in the façade, and the Mission Revival parapet. The signage and the use of plywood in the window openings are not contributing elements.