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) 843 Polk Street

P1. Historic name of building (if any): Walker King Co. 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 Location: *a: County San Francisco ☐ Not for Publication ■ Unrestricted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 843 Polk Street City San Francisco Zip 94109
d. UTM: Zone _____; _____mE/ _____ mN *e. Assessor's parcel #: Block 718, lot 3

*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 north 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 gray. The lower portion of the façade is divided into two parts, namely, a vehicle entrance at left and a wider storefront window at right. The window has its original profiled bronze frames, wooden casing, and a wooden sill.

The top of the facade consists of a gabled and stepped parapet, plus a large frieze area decorated with three vertical slits. A course of slightly projecting headers lines the top of the parapet, and another course of bricks, laid vertically, can be found immediately beneath the headers.

*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
1920; building permit

*P7. Owner and Address:
MORGAN TARA M
1429 KALMIA ST
SAN MATEO CA 94402

*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) 843 Polk Street

B1. Historic Name: Walker King Co. auto repair shop

B2. Common Name: _____

B3. Original Use: auto repair B4. Present Use: unknown

***B5. Architectural Style:** none

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

Built in 1920.

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

***B8. Related Features:**

none

B9a. Architect: C. O. Clausen b. Builder: probably 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 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 north (845 Polk), which had the same owner and architect. The building contractor for #845 was J. G. Kincannon, who was most likely the builder of #843 as well.

This building was occupied continuously by automobile repair shops from the time of its completion through at least 1964. The first proprietor was Emil A. Schkade, who called his auto repair business the Walker-King Company from 1920 to 1954. Walker-King had previously been located (briefly) at 1930 Van Ness, under a different ownership. It seems that Schkade purchased the fledgling business and then moved it into this building upon its completion, retaining the name for 34 years.

The subsequent auto repair shop in this building was Polk Street Automotive Service, from 1955 to at least 1964. Combined, the two shops were in business here for 44 years (through 1964).

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

***B12. References:**

Building permit #90446 (January 7, 1920), filed under "839 Polk," at S. F. Building Inspection Dept., 1660 Mission Street

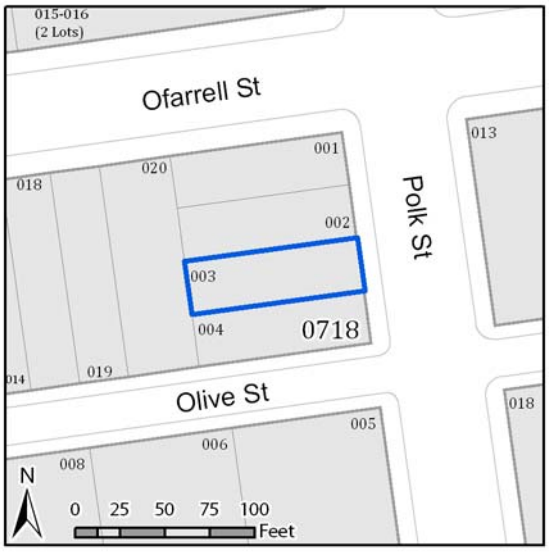
Crocker-Langley and Polk's city directory, and PT&T reverse directory listings for occupants of this building, 1921-1964

B13. Remarks:

***B14. Evaluator:** William Kostura

Date of Evaluation: September 2009

(Sketch map with north arrow required)



(This space reserved for official comments.)

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 (the building being evaluated here). 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. 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 from 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

No known changes have been made to the façade of this building. It retains integrity of location, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. Integrity of setting is diminished through nearby demolitions.

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 44 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 long and moderately early use as an automobile repair shop. The Period of Significance under this criterion is from 1920-1964.

The first proprietor of the auto repair shop in this building had a long career, but aside from this he does not appear to have been prominent in his field. Accordingly, this building does not appear to be eligible for the California Register under Criterion 2.

Architecturally, this building is very 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; its brick façade, including the pattern of brickwork in the parapet and frieze; the dimensions of the vehicle entrance and window opening; and the materials of the window frame (profiled bronze), casing (wood), and sill (wood).