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

PRIMARY RECORD

Primary # _____
HRI # _____
Trinomial _____
NRHP Status Code 6Z
Other Listings _____
Review Code _____ Reviewer _____ Date _____

 *Resource Name or #: (Assigned by recorder) 1043-1045 Polk Street

P1. Historic name of building (if any): Blass Machine Works 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 Location: *a: County San Francisco ☐ Not for Publication ■ Unrestricted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 1045 Polk Street City San Francisco Zip 94109

d. UTM: Zone _____; _____mE/ _____ mN *e. Assessor's parcel #: Block 694, lot 2

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

This one-story-plus-mezzanine, reinforced concrete commercial building fills the width of its 20-foot wide lot. The surface of the building is coated in stucco. At the top of the building is a curving parapet with square ends that imparts a faintly Mission Revival feeling. Within the area of the parapet is a plaster shield with leafy swags. Below this are a plain cornice that is shallow in its depth, a blank frieze, and a rope molding. Paneled end piers frame the composition of the building below the rope molding. Two windows with replacement metal sash can be found in the mezzanine level, and similar metal framing or sash is employed in the first story for the storefront windows and entrance. To the left of the storefront is a replacement door to the mezzanine level.

***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
1924; building permit

***P7. Owner and Address:**
LAI CHUNG SUM
337 18TH AVE
SAN FRANCISCO CA 94121

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

***P9. Date Recorded:** _____
October 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** 6Z

***Resource Name or #** (Assigned by recorder) 1043-1045 Polk Street

B1. Historic Name: Blass Machine Works shop

B2. Common Name: _____

B3. Original Use: machine shop B4. Present Use: restaurant

***B5. Architectural Style:** blend of Classical Revival and Mission Revival

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

Built in 1924. Window openings and storefront altered at an unknown date.

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

***B8. Related Features:**

none

B9a. Architect: none b. Builder: Kiernan and O'Brien

***B10. Significance: Theme** automobile industry **Area** San Francisco

Period of Significance n/a **Property Type** machine shop **Applicable Criteria** n/a

(Discuss importance in terms of historical or architectural context as defined by theme, period, and geographic scope. Also address integrity.)

History

This building was built in 1924 for owner R. J. O'Brien as an investment. The intended use, according to the original building permit, was as a machine shop, and the building did indeed have this use for its first thirteen years. The first occupant was Ralph Blass, who named his business Blass Machine Works and remained here from 1924-1937. His city directory listings reveal that he was a general machinist, but specialized to some degree in automotive machinist work. He advertised in 1927 that he did cylinder grinding and disc wheel straightening in addition to other machine work. In 1924 he was one of dozens of machinists in San Francisco, but one of only three in the study area (on or near Van ness Avenue), and this indicates that he sought out machinist jobs related to automobile repair.

Subsequent auto repair or service shops in this building included Dependable Automotive Service Co. (1940), I. C. Malmburg auto repair (1945-1948), Jim's Body Shop (1953), and Jack Underwood auto upholstery (1964).

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

***B12. References:**

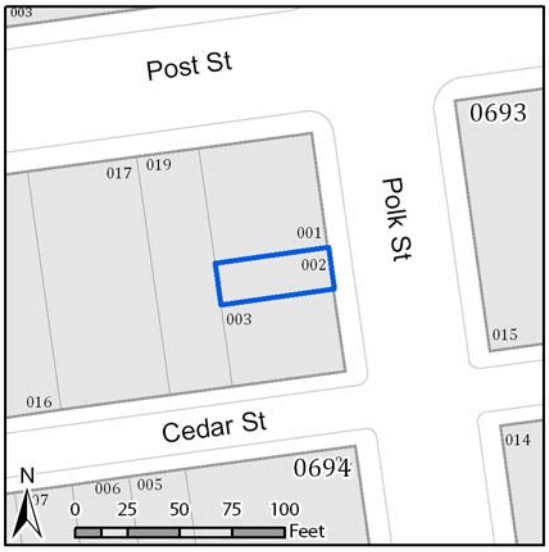
Building permit #124033 (Feb. 15, 1924), filed under "1041 Polk"
Crocker-Langley and Polk's city directory, and PT&T reverse directory listings for occupants of this building, 1924-1964
1929 Sanborn insurance map ("machine shop")
1948 Sanborn insurance map ("auto repair")

B13. Remarks:

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

(This space reserved for official comments.)

(Sketch map with north arrow required)



History (continued)

In sum, a machine shop with some specialty in automotive work occupied this building for thirteen years, and other auto repair shops were here for at least seven years through 1964, for a total of at least twenty years of such occupancy.

Integrity

The wall surfaces of this building are mostly unaltered, but the window and entrance openings, including almost the entire first story, have been altered. In sum, this building retains integrity of location and setting, while integrity of design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association have been moderately or greatly diminished.

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 1924, this is a moderately early example of a machine shop with some specialty in automotive work. With 13 years of such use in its history, it has moderate longevity in this use. It has a total of at least 20 years of machine shop and auto repair use in its history through 1964, for good longevity. Because the first and longest-term occupant, Blass Machine Works, did general machine work as well as automotive machine work, the early automotive history of this building is diluted. When the diminished integrity of the building is also considered, it appears that this building does not appear to be eligible for the California Register of Historical Resources under Criterion 1.

As one of very many machinists in San Francisco during the 1920s-1930s, Ralph Blass does not appear to have special significance in his field, his automotive specialty notwithstanding. Accordingly, this building does not appear to be eligible for the California Register under Criterion 2.

Architecturally, this building is very modest, and lacks good integrity. It thus does not appear to be eligible for the California Register under Criterion 3.