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) 730 Polk Street/771 Ellis Street

P1. Historic name of building (if any): Chanslor and Lyon automobile accessories and parts store
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 Location: *a: County San Francisco ☐ Not for Publication ■ Unrestricted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 730 Polk Street/771 Ellis Street City San Francisco Zip 94109
d. UTM: Zone _____; _____mE/ _____ mN *e. Assessor's parcel #: Block 740, lot 18

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

This is a four-story brick building with wooden internal piers, joists, and girders. It fills its 120-foot by 110-foot lot at the southeast corner of Polk and Ellis streets. The face bricks are slightly variegated, being tan and buff in color. These bricks form the piers, spandrels, parapet, and upper first story walls of the building. The spandrels are very slightly, but visibly, recessed from the piers. Set within the piers and spandrels of the upper three stories are original windows of industrial steel sash. These windows are fixed, save for their centers, which open as hoppers. In the first story all windows have replacement sash of metal. These are divided into many lights, and relate well to the older steel sash in the stories above.

(See Continuation Sheet, page 2.)

*P3b Resource Attributes: HP7 – four story commercial building; HP8 – wholesale house

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

P5b. Description of Photo: (View, date, accession #)
View looking southeast
June 2009

*P6. Date Constructed/Age and Source: ■ Historic ☐ Prehistoric ☐ Both
1922; building permit

*P7. Owner and Address:
PROJECT OPEN HAND
730 POLK ST
SAN FRANCISCO CA 94109

*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)

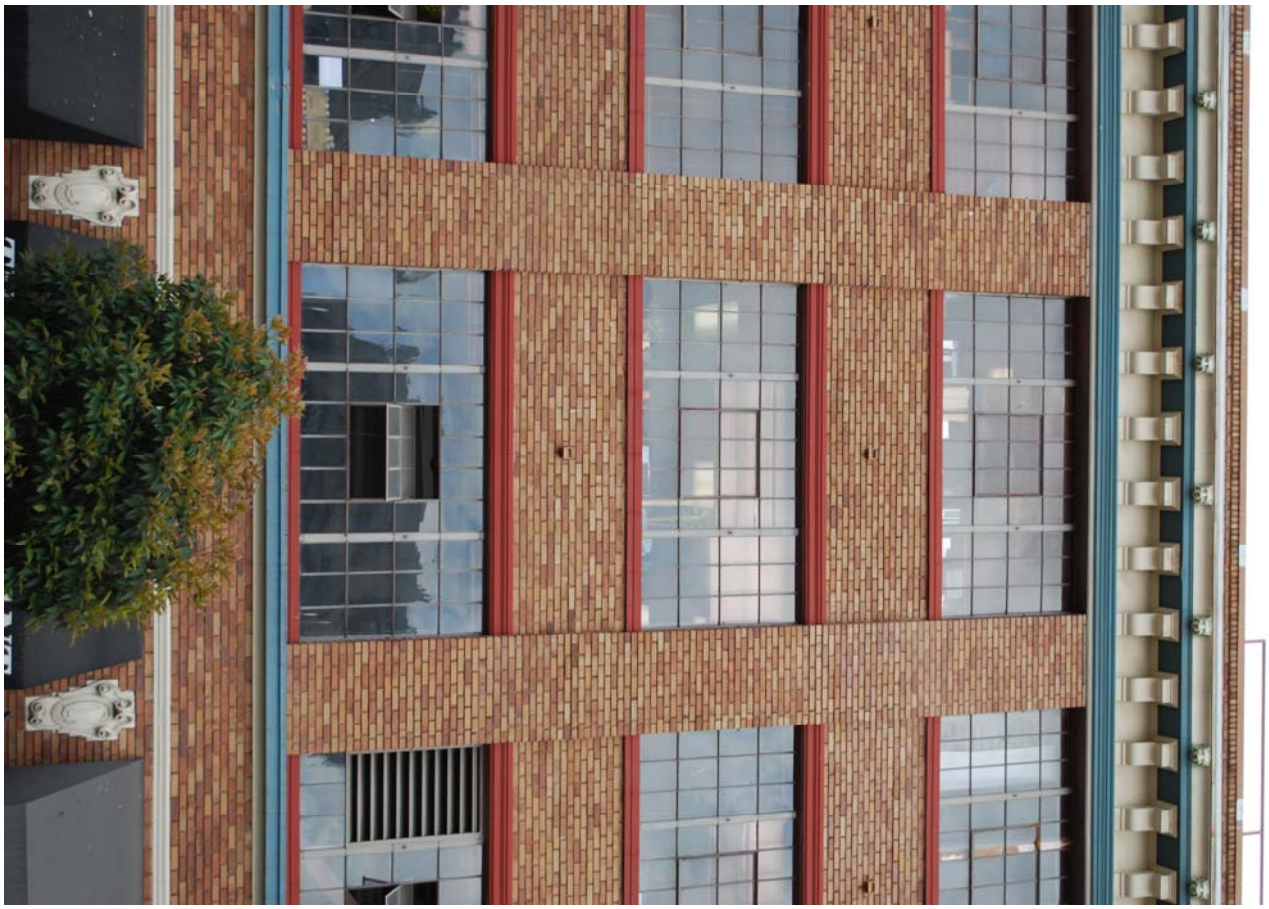
Description (continued):

At the top of the building, just below the parapet, is a profiled cornice, with lions' heads in the soffit of the cornice and curvilinear brackets or modillions beneath, giving support. The other ornament on this building consists of elaborate shields, most likely of terra cotta, each with the raised letters "C&L", which stand for the original owners and occupants, Chanslor and Lyon.

Profiled courses of terra cotta can be found immediately beneath the cornice brackets, at the top and bottom of each industrial steel sash window, at the second floor level, and near the top of the first story.

Coloration includes white, for the cornice, shields, and the string course near the top of the first story; light blue, for the courses beneath the cornice and at the second floor level; reddish-orange, for the courses above and below the steel sash windows; and, as mentioned above, tan and buff bricks. Aside from the bricks and the shields, it is not known for certain whether these colors are original. Finally, the newer first story window sash is reddish, and relates well to the terra cotta window courses.

Ellis Street façade



Detail of an Ellis Street bay

BUILDING, STRUCTURE, AND OBJECT RECORD

***NRHP Status Code** 3CS

***Resource Name or #** (Assigned by recorder) 730 Polk Street/771 Ellis Street

B1. Historic Name: Chanslor and Lyon automobile accessories and parts store

B2. Common Name: _____

B3. Original Use: auto parts store B4. Present Use: Project Open Hand

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

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

Built in 1922. Storefront windows rebuilt in 1986.

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

***B8. Related Features:**

none

B9a. Architect: William L. Schmolle b. Builder: York Realty Company

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

Period of Significance 1922-1964 **Property Type** auto accessories store **Applicable Criteria** 1, 2, 3

(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 1922 for the automobile accessories and parts house, Chanslor and Lyon, for use as their wholesale store. The architect was William L. Schmolle, who practiced in San Francisco from 1909 to 1930.

Chanslor and Lyon was by far the largest and longest-lasting general automobile supplies store in San Francisco's history. It opened in 1906 under the ownership of Walter G. Chanslor and Philip H. Lyon, who lived in Los Angeles. During its first fourteen or so years in San Francisco C&L occupied leased buildings at 542 Golden Gate, 501-507 Golden Gate, 1238-1240 Van Ness, and 1147 Van Ness, all now demolished. By 1922, when they built this building to house their auto supplies and tires store, the owners had moved to San Francisco.

(See Continuation Sheet, page 4.)

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

***B12. References:**

Building permit #107195 (June 7, 1922), at S. F. Building Inspection Dept., 1660 Mission Street

San Francisco Examiner, September 23, 1922, "Chanslor-Lyon Co. Building"

1929 and 1948 Sanborn maps ("wholesale auto supplies")

Crocker-Langley and Polk's city directory, and PT&T reverse directory listings for occupants of this building, 1923-1966

B13. Remarks:

***B14. Evaluator:** William Kostura

Date of Evaluation: September 2009

(This space reserved for official comments.)

(Sketch map with north arrow required)

History (continued)

When this building opened in September 1922, the *San Francisco Examiner* called it "the largest on the Pacific Coast devoted exclusively to housing automotive equipment." The 1929 and 1948 Sanborn maps describe the use of the building as "wholesale auto supplies," but from city directory listings it appears that Chanslor and Lyon also engaged in retail sales. It is not known to what degree this store distributed auto supplies through northern California on a wholesale basis. Chanslor and Lyon remained in this building until 1966, for a total of 44 years. Both Walter Chanslor and Philip Lyon remained officers in this business (president and vice-president) through 1948.

The only other auto supplies house in San Francisco that was comparable to Chanslor and Lyon in importance was Kahn and Keville, which was founded in the 1910s and is still in business today. It, however, carried a much more limited line of automobile supplies (mainly tires, batteries, and radios).

Integrity

Aside from the first story window sash and doors, the façade of this building remains unchanged. It 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 1922, this is a moderately early example of an automobile accessories, supplies and tires store. With about 42 years of such use in its history (through 1964), it has excellent longevity in this use. For this reason, and because of the building's high integrity, 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 supplies store. With more research into the history of Chanslor and Lyon's wholesale operations, it may develop that this building may also be eligible at the state level. The Period of Significance under this criterion is 1922-1964.

(Continued on page 6.)

Evaluation (continued)

Walter G. Chanslor and Philip H. Lyon were clearly very important in San Francisco's automobile supplies industry. As this is the last building associated with their San Francisco business that still stands, and because it was their most important store, this building appears to be eligible for the California Register under Criterion 2, at the local level. As with Criterion 1, above, this building might also be found to be eligible at the state level with more research. The Period of Significance under this criterion is from 1922 to 1948.

Architecturally, this building is striking in the clarity with which its structure is expressed (by its use of spandrels that are slightly recessed relative to the piers, and of large expanses of industrial steel sash windows), its minimalist but effective use of ornament, and its use of color and texture in the bricks and terra cotta. It is similar in some ways to large, skeletal loft buildings of reinforced concrete that are found South-of-Market and in this study area, but with much more color and texture than those buildings possess. Accordingly, this building appears to be eligible for the California Register under Criterion 3 at the local level. The Period of Significance under this criterion is 1922, the year the building was built.

Character defining features

The character defining features of this building are its height and width; its brick piers, spandrels, and other wall elements; its industrial steel sash windows; and all ornamental details such as the cornice, profiled courses, and shields. The variegated tan and buff color of the brick is also important. Color testing would have to be done on the decorative elements (cornice, courses, and shields) to see if their color is original, and hence significant.