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) 650 Polk Street

P1. Historic name of building (if any): B&S Automotive Service 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 Location: *a: County San Francisco ☐ Not for Publication ■ Unrestricted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 650 Polk Street City San Francisco Zip 94109
d. UTM: Zone _____; _____mE/ _____ mN *e. Assessor's parcel #: Block 741, lot 8

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

This is a one-story, reinforced concrete auto repair shop that fills its 27'-6" wide by 82'-6" deep lot. The surface of the façade is covered with a coat of stucco. As is usual with auto repair shops of this narrow width, the façade is divided into two bays of unequal width. These bays are separated from each other, and defined, by narrow piers that are plain in finish. To the left is a vehicle entrance and to the right is a wider storefront window. The window is set in a wooden frame that may be original. Above both the window and the vehicle entrance are transoms that are divided by wooden muntins into many lights. At the top of the building are a gabled parapet, a profiled cornice supported by acanthus leaf modillions, and a band of plaster rinceaux that stretches across the frieze. This rinceaux is deteriorated at the far right of the frieze. The interior is now divided into two spaces, one for an auto repair shop and the other a store for sales of car stereos and alarms.

*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 east
June 2009

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

*P7. Owner and Address:
WALSH FAMILY TR
27 PRESIDIO TER
SAN FRANCISCO CA 94118

*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)

Detail of upper half of building

BUILDING, STRUCTURE, AND OBJECT RECORD

***NRHP Status Code** 3CS

***Resource Name or #** (Assigned by recorder) 650 Polk Street

B1. Historic Name: B&S Automotive Service shop

B2. Common Name: _____

B3. Original Use: auto repair B4. Present Use: auto repair plus a car stereo and alarms strore

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

***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: unknown or none 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 building was built in 1920 for owner Louis Blum. The original building permit did not list an architect or builder, but it was signed by the building contractor J. G. Kincannon, who is known to have built apartment buildings in Lower Nob Hill and commercial buildings along the Van Ness Avenue corridor. Presumably Kincannon was the builder and most likely also the designer of this building.

From the date of its completion through at least 1964 this building has been occupied by automobile repair shops. The proprietors or shop names included Edward A. Morrison and Leon G. Chaix (1920-1923); Michael Spacek (1926-1932); the U. S. Veterans' Automobile Repair Shop (1933-1938); Anderson (Neils C.) Ignition and Repair Service (1940-1946); and, the longest lasting, B&S Automotive Service (1948 to at least 1964). In sum, this building was occupied for at least forty years (through 1964) by auto repair shops.

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

***B12. References:**

Building permit #94614 (August 27, 1920), filed under "646 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

1929 and 1948 Sanborn maps ("auto repair")

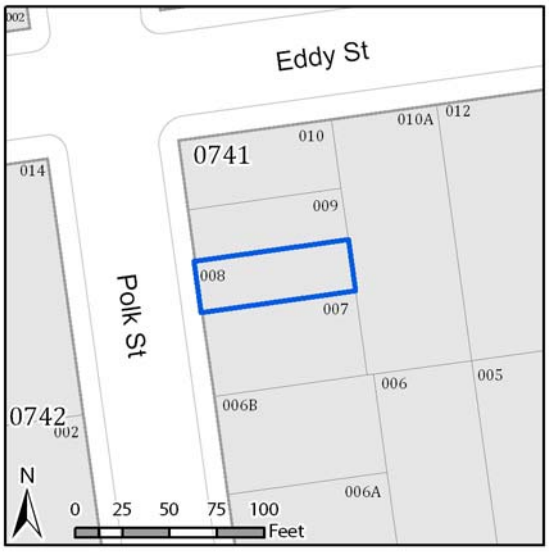
B13. Remarks:

***B14. Evaluator:** William Kostura

Date of Evaluation: September 2009

(This space reserved for official comments.)

(Sketch map with north arrow required)



History – Context – Surviving automobile repair shops in the study area

In order to determine the best examples of auto repair shops in the study area (i.e., along the Van Ness Avenue corridor), the following study is offered as historical context. A brief history of this business type is offered first; next, examples of auto repair shops are compared according to their earliest date of auto repair use, longevity of auto repair use, integrity, and occasionally size or capacity. From the lists given below, 650 Polk can be compared to other such shops.

As a 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. This is the oldest building in the study area that was built (in 1915) as an auto repair shop.

731-799 Van Ness Avenue. Auto repair use beginning in 1917, for 28 years. 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.

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

(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 (the building being evaluated here). 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. 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 of interest 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, beginning in 1923.

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

1540 Bush Street. 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.

(Continued next page.)

History – Context (continued)

650 Polk, then, is one of the ten oldest examples of an auto repair shop in the study area. Only three buildings in the study area held an auto repair shop for a longer period of time (considered through 1964). It is also among the smaller auto repair shops in the study area, and thus its capacity was smaller than that of other such shops.

Integrity

No alterations to the façade of this building are evident. 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 1920, this is a moderately early example of an automobile repair shop, but still one of the ten oldest in the study area. With at least 40 years of such use in its history (through 1964), it has excellent longevity in this use; only three shops had longer such use. These factors outweigh the fact that it is also one of the smaller auto repair shops in the study area, and thus had less capacity for such use compared to some others. For these reasons, and because of its 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 auto repair shop. The Period of Significance under this criterion is from 1920 to 1964.

None of the proprietors of auto repair shops in this building is known to have been important or prominent in this field. Accordingly, this building does not appear to be eligible for the California Register under Criterion 2.

Architecturally, this building is 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 vehicle and window openings, the transoms with their wooden frames and muntins, the rinceaux ornament in the frieze, the cornice with its modillions, and the gabled parapet.