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) 68 12th Street

P1. Historic name of building (if any): Jeffrey Auto Sales Co. showroom

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 Location: *a: County San Francisco ☐ Not for Publication ■ Unrestricted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.

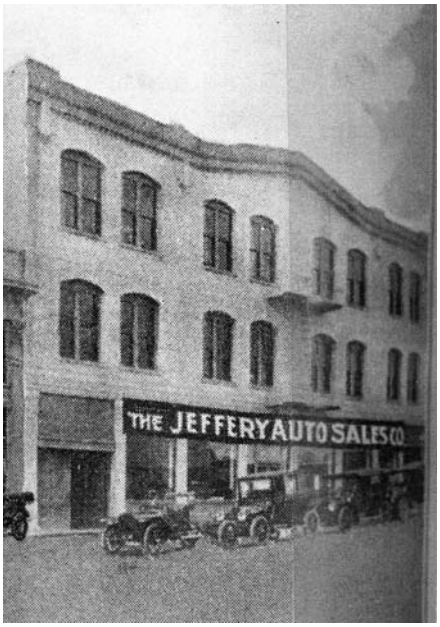
c. Address 56 - 70 12th Street City San Francisco Zip 94103

d. UTM: Zone _____; _____mE/ _____ mN *e. Assessor's parcel #: Block 3505, lot 9

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

This three-story, brick masonry building fills the width of its 100-foot wide lot. The surface of the building is covered with a coat of stucco that has been scored to resemble masonry. This scoring includes an impression of voussoirs over the segmental arched windows in the upper two stories; the sills at the base of each window are also scored. In composition the façade is symmetrical, with the upper two stories divided into four bays and the first story into eight bays. The windows of the upper stories are grouped into pairs, with one pair per bay. By contrast, the bays in the first story are defined by pilasters. At the top of the building is a parapet topped by a thin string course. This parapet rises to a shallow peak over the two middle bays. Façade ornamentation includes four stepped pyramids (found atop the end piers and flanking the parapet), a frieze with a Greek key pattern at the second floor level, and plaster shields at the top of each pilaster. Windows in all three stories have non-original metal sash or frames. Those in the upper stories have horizontal sash dividers in the same location as in the original windows.

***P3b Resource Attributes:** HP6 – commercial building; HP8 – industrial building



View of the building in 1913.

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

P5b. Description of Photo: (View, date, accession #)
Historic photograph from SF Newsletter, Christmas 1913

***P6. Date Constructed/Age and Source:** ■ Historic ☐ Prehistoric ☐ Both
1912; building permit

***P7. Owner and Address:**
E&M NO 1 LLC
68 12TH ST #300
San Francisco CA 94103

***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)

View looking southwest, June 2009

BUILDING, STRUCTURE, AND OBJECT RECORD

***NRHP Status Code** 3CS

***Resource Name or #** (Assigned by recorder) 68 Twelfth Street

B1. Historic Name: Jeffrey Auto Sales Co. showroom

B2. Common Name: _____

B3. Original Use: auto sales B4. Present Use: _____

***B5. Architectural Style:** First story: Classical Revival. Upper stories: 19th century industrial

***B6. Construction History:** (Construction date, alterations, and date of alterations)
Built in 1912. Building re-plastered in 1920.

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

***B8. Related Features:**
none

B9a. Architect: Miller and Colmesnil (1912). A. H. Knoll (1920) b. Builder: J. D. Hannah (1912)

***B10. Significance: Themes** automobile industry, architecture **Area** San Francisco
Period of Significance 1912-1918, 1920 **Property Type** auto showroom **Applicable Criteria** 1, 3
(Discuss importance in terms of historical or architectural context as defined by theme, period, and geographic scope. Also address integrity.)

History: Construction and architects

This building was built in 1912 for the John Brickell Company as an investment, to designs by architects Miller and Colmesnil. The head of the firm, James R. Miller, trained under Peter R. Schmidt, A. Page Brown, and Frank S. Van Trees before opening his own office in 1902. He partnered with George T. de Colmesnil intermittently during 1906-1913 and then worked solo until forming a partnership with his draftsman, Timothy Pflueger, in ca. 1922. On his own and with de Colmesnil, Miller had an substantial practice, designing many commercial buildings, apartment buildings, and residences. Among his works were major additions to the Metropolitan Life Insurance building at 600 Stockton, including the pedimented central pavilion; and the rehabilitation of the City of Paris building after the earthquake and fire. Besides 68 Twelfth Street, Miller designed two other automobile-related buildings, both very fine garages: at 1745 Clay Street (1914; in the study area of this report) and at 2401 Bush (1915-1916). The later partnership of Miller and Pflueger resulted in some of the most celebrated skyscrapers, theaters, and other buildings in the Bay Area, including the PT&T and 450 Sutter skyscrapers, the Paramount Theater in Oakland, the Castro and Alhambra theaters in San Francisco, Roosevelt Middle School, and the Stock Exchange at 301 Pine/155 Sansome, among many others.

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

***B12. References:**
Building permit #43044 (June 19, 1912), filed under "56-70 12th St."
Crocker-Langley and Polk's city directory, and PT&T reverse directory listings for occupants of this building, 1913-1964
1929 and 1948 Sanborn insurance maps
Wikipedia entries on Thomas B. Jeffrey, Rambler, and Nash

B13. Remarks:

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

(This space reserved for official comments.)

(Sketch map with north arrow required)

History: Occupants

The original intended use according to the building permit was as a "showroom," and the building did house auto showrooms for its first six years. The first occupant, from 1912-1915, was the Thomas B. Jeffrey Co. Thomas B. Jeffery made his first automobile in 1897 and began mass production of Rambler autos in 1902, at his huge plant in Kinosha, Wisconsin. Upon his death in 1910 his son took over the firm and in 1914 changed the name of his auto brand from Rambler to Jeffery in memory of his father. This history is consistent with San Francisco city directory listings regarding the sale of autos at 68 Twelfth Street: in 1913 Jeffery sold Ramblers here, and in 1914-1915 it sold Jeffery motor cars and trucks.

The Jeffery Company was sold to former General Motors president Charles W. Nash in 1916, and he soon renamed the company and its autos as "Nash," after himself. Nash became a very successful maker of mid-priced autos for the middle class. After its merger with Hudson in 1954, it took the name of American Motor Company (AMC) and re-introduced the Rambler brand name. Thus, the Thomas B. Jeffery Company was the direct corporate precursor to Nash Motors and American Motor Company.

Several other buildings in San Francisco have served as Jeffery or Nash auto showrooms over several decades. The list is as follows:

1908-1910: Thomas B. Jeffery Co. at 117 Valencia Street (demolished)
1912-1915: Thomas B. Jeffery Co. at 68 Twelfth Street
1916: Thomas B. Jeffery Co. at 1100 Van Ness Avenue (completely altered)
1918-1919: Pacific Nash Motor Co. at 1525 Van Ness Avenue (extant)
1920-1935: Pacific Nash Motor Co. at 1849 Van Ness Avenue (extant)
1936-1954: Nash autos sold at 1301-1325 Van Ness Avenue (extant)
1955-1959: Nash autos sold at 550-590 Van Ness Avenue (extant)

After the Jeffery Company moved away from 68 Twelfth, this building was occupied, during 1916-1918, by the Stevens-Duryea Company and the Garford Motor Truck Company. Stevens-Duryea was briefly prominent as an auto brand in the United States. The "Duryea" of the firm name was one of the Duryea brothers (Frank and Charles) who manufactured some of the first gasoline-powered autos in the United States during the 1890s. Stevens-Duryea was founded in Massachusetts in 1901 and manufactured automobiles until 1919. This building, then, housed Stevens-Duryea in San Francisco during its last years. Stevens-Duryea shared the building with Garford Motor Truck Company, founded in Ohio in 1909.

Although close to the busy intersection of Market and Van Ness, this building was off the beaten path of automobile shoppers, and it may have been a poor location for an auto showroom. The building became devoted to light industrial uses after 1918. It was a newspaper plant and office in the mid-1920s and was divided into three storefronts in 1928. The longest-lasting occupant was the Boyd Lighting Fixture Co. during at least 1940-1964. A furniture manufacturing and upholstery business also occupied part of the building during the 1940s-1960s.

History: Early façade alterations

A building permit dated August 1920 states that the façade of this building was to be plastered to designs by architect A. H. Knoll. Although a poor photo from 1913 seems to show the building with a stucco front, it does seem likely that the facade was stuccoed (or re-stuccoed) in 1920. Generally an architect would not be hired to perform such work, but this façade has finely-detailed outlines of voussoirs and other faux-masonry scoring. In all likelihood the design of this stucco work was by Andrew H. Knoll, formerly of the important firm Falch and Knoll.

It is not certain, but the work done in 1920 may have also resulted in two other façade alterations. One was the removal of a heavy belt course along the top of the parapet and its replacement by a thin string course. The other was the addition of four pyramidal decorations atop the parapet.

Integrity

Façade alterations include (apparently) a new stucco façade in 1920, an altered parapet top (most likely in 1920), and new window sash (in recent years). The building still looks similar to how it looked in a photograph dated 1913. For the period 1912-1919 (i.e., before the new stucco work of 1920), this building retains integrity of location, setting, feeling, and association, while integrity of design, materials, and workmanship have been slightly diminished. For the period since 1920, the building is probably intact save for the window sash; it retains integrity of location, design, materials, setting, feeling, and association, while integrity of workmanship has been 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 1912, this is an early example of an automobile showroom. With six years of such use in its history, its longevity as an auto showroom was brief. The building is significant because the initial occupants were important early auto brands: the Thomas B. Jeffrey Company, which made Rambler autos and was the precursor to Nash Motors and American Motor Company; and Stevens-Duryea. Although Jeffery occupied this building for only three years, there may be few Jeffrey showrooms left standing in major cities of the United States and there are none intact in San Francisco. Despite the façade alterations described above this building still evokes the period when Jeffrey and Stevens-Duryea

(Continued on next page.)

Evaluation (continued)

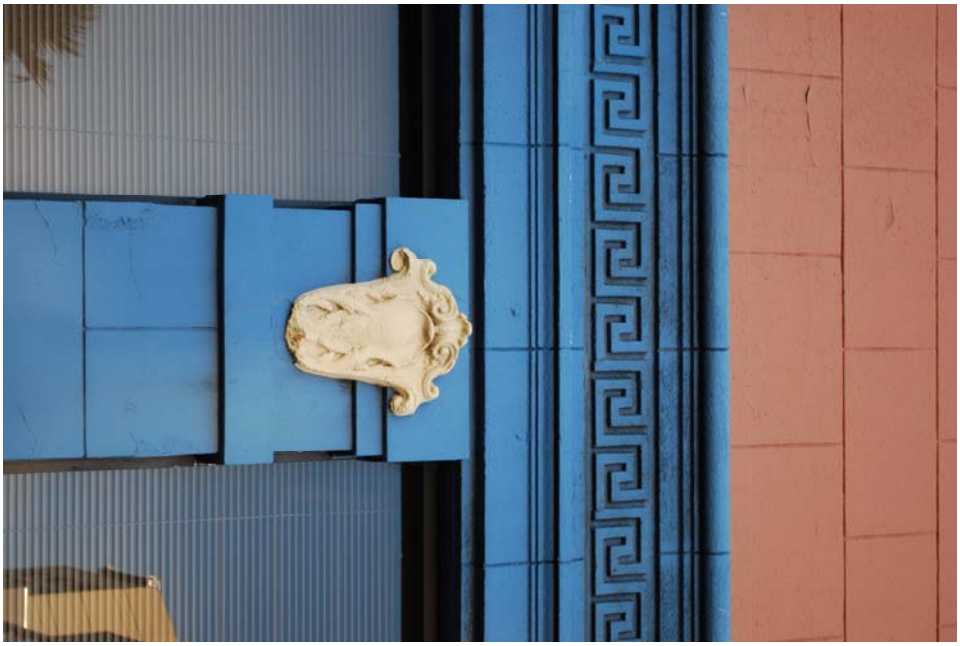
were here. Because of the importance of these auto makers, especially Jeffery, in American automobile history, this building appears to be eligible for the California Register of Historical Resources under Criterion 1, at the local level, for its use as an automobile showroom. The Period of Significance under this criterion is 1912-1918, the years Jeffrey and Stevens-Duryea were here.

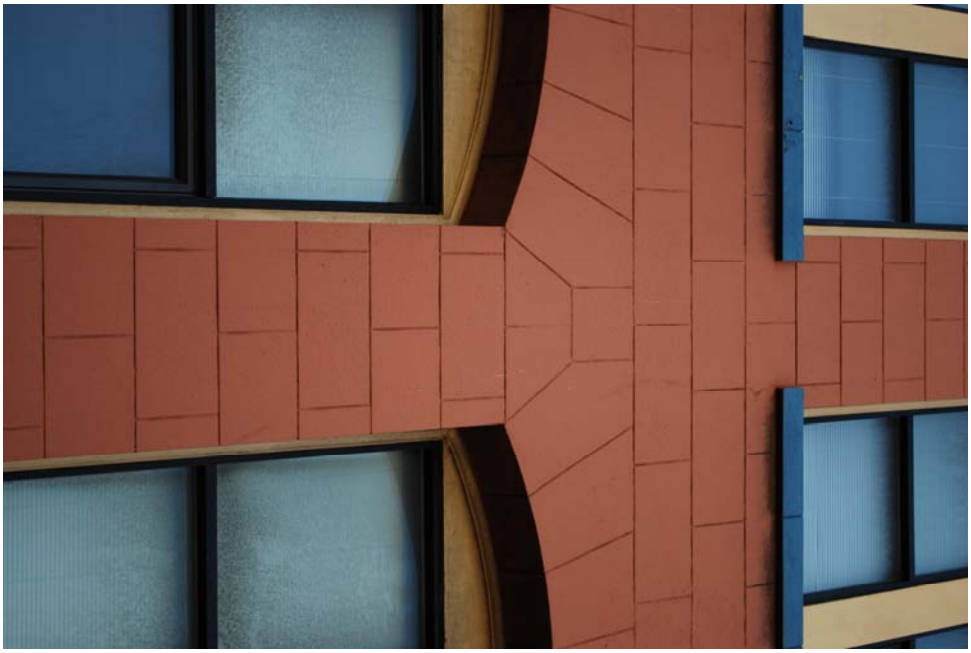
No individual persons of note are associated with this building. Accordingly, it does not appear to be eligible for the California Register under Criterion 2.

Architecturally, this building is an unusual, and finely detailed example of a medium-sized industrial building. The overall effect is more like a 19th century industrial building than one from the early 20th century, and is suitable to this South-of-Market locale. It is, in fact, one of the best of many industrial buildings in the vicinity. Its quality is slightly muted by the new metal window sash, but on balance this building appears to be eligible for the California Register under Criterion 3 for its design. The Period of Significance under this criterion is 1912 and 1920, the years of construction and façade alteration.

Character defining features

The character defining features of this building are its height and width, the stucco surface with its faux-masonry scoring, the string course and pyramidal decorations at the top of the parapet, the segmental arched shape of the upper story window openings, the window sills in the upper stories, the frieze with Greek key pattern at the second floor level, and the pilasters with ornament in the first story.





Top photo: Detail of first story columns and frieze
Bottom photo: Detail of stucco scoring