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) 840-850 Ellis Street

P1. Historic name of building (if any): _____

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 Location: *a: County San Francisco ☐ Not for Publication ■ Unrestricted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 840-850 Ellis Street City San Francisco Zip 94109
d. UTM: Zone _____; _____mE/ _____ mN *e. Assessor's parcel #: Block 718, lot 8

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

This is a two-story-plus-mezzanine reinforced concrete public garage that fills the width of its 55-foot lot. The building is clad in a coat of stucco that is lightly scored. The central bay rises to an arched upper story window, and a stepped and gabled parapet. Over-scaled keystones can be found in the arched window, over the flanking rectangular windows, and over rectangular mezzanine windows. A bold belt course stretches the full width of the top of the building.

All window openings in all three levels, and the pedestrian entrance, have replacement aluminum frames and sash. Vehicle entrances with roll-up metal doors can be found in the center of the first story and at far left. The latter entrance is to a concrete ramp that leads to the second story.

*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 north
June 2009

*P6. Date Constructed/Age and Source: ■ Historic ☐ Prehistoric ☐ Both
1919-1920. Published building contract

*P7. Owner and Address:
ANDREW M COLE TRUST
P.O. BOX 156795
SAN FRANCISCO CA 94115

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

*P9. Date Recorded: July 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) 840-850 Ellis Street

B1. Historic Name: _____

B2. Common Name: _____

B3. Original Use: public garage B4. Present Use: auto repair shops

***B5. Architectural Style:** none

***B6. Construction History:** (Construction date, alterations, and date of alterations)
Built in 1919-1920. Altered at an unknown date.

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

***B8. Related Features:**
none

B9a. Architect: probably William Helbing b. Builder: probably William Helbing

***B10. Significance: Theme** auto industry **Area** San Francisco
Period of Significance n/a **Property Type** garage **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 1919-1920 for owner Oscar M. Curtaz. The published building contract states that the plans were "by owner" and construction was "supervised" by William Helbing. In all likelihood Helbing was both the designer and building contractor for this building, just as he had been for another Curtaz-owned building nearby (at 824 Ellis, 1920).

The original use of this building was as the Black and White Garage, during 1920-1921. Taxicab companies occupied part or all of the building over the next six years (e.g. United Taxicab Co. in 1922-1923 and Red Top Cab Co. in 1924-1927). An auto painting company, Lam-O-Lac, occupied part of the building in 1927. During 1929-1931 the building was devoted to auto repair use and occupied by Motor Service Engineering. Two other auto repair shops were here in 1933.

Delivery services occupied the building in the late 1930s and early 1940s. From 1946 to 1964 a car wash business, Di Dee Wash, occupied part of the building, while other businesses sometimes occupied another part (in 1946, an auto repair shop; in 1964, an auto accessories store).

(See Continuation Sheet, page 3.)

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

***B12. References:**
Building and Engineering News, December 3, 1919
Crocker-Langley and Polk's city directory and PT&T reverse directory listings for occupants of this building, 1920-1964

B13. Remarks:

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

(This space reserved for official comments.)

(Sketch map with north arrow required)

History (continued)

The probable designer and builder of this building, William Helbing, was active in San Francisco as a builder from the 1890s through at least 1929. He began by building Victorian-style houses, but by 1906 he was building downtown commercial buildings and substantial apartment buildings. By the 1920s he was building tall steel frame and reinforced concrete apartment buildings. He was prolific, and often built on his own account as well as for others as a contractor. He generally designed the buildings he built (especially those he owned), and many of them are very attractive. Some of his better-known and more important buildings include Sam's Grill, at 364 Bush (1907); the York Hotel, at 940 Sutter (1925); six-story apartments at 801-809 Van Ness (1927); and six-story apartments at 2127 Broadway (1929).

Integrity

The main body of the façade seems relatively intact. However, the window and door openings have all been altered, and these take up a large proportion of the area of the façade. Overall, the building retains integrity of location, design, setting, and association. It has probably lost integrity of materials, workmanship, and feeling.

Evaluation

This is one of more than 115 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*.

This building does not appear to be eligible for the California Register. The original use of this building as a garage was very brief, only one or two years. Subsequent auto repair and auto painting uses were intermittent and also brief. The other uses of the building, as a taxicab company garage, as a delivery service, and as a car wash (the longest use), are only peripherally related to the automobile support industry uses being studied in the cover report, and they should be considered minor uses. For these reasons, and because the integrity of the building is at best fair, this building does not appear to be eligible for the California Register under criteria 1 or 2. Regarding Criterion 3, design, this building lacks, or has lost, the fine detail present in much of William Helbing's other work. It therefore lacks significance for its design.