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) 155 Grove Street

P1. Historic name of building (if any): Harry M. Nicolson auto repair 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 Location: *a: County San Francisco ☐ Not for Publication ■ Unrestricted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 155 Grove Street City San Francisco Zip 94102
d. UTM: Zone _____; _____mE/ _____ mN *e. Assessor's parcel #: Block 811, lot 16

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

This one-story brick masonry building fills its lot, which is 34' in width and runs through the block 120' to Ivy Street. The brick front wall has been painted white, while the visible west wall, also of brick, has the remnant of a painted sign reading "Harry [Nico]lson – Auto R[epairin]g." (See detail photo.) The façade rises to a gabled parapet with a flattened top and sides. A cornice with an imitation clay tile covering and supporting block modillions stretches across the front of the building. The façade is divided into three bays, with storefront windows at left and center, and a pedestrian entrance at right. The storefront windows probably date to 1937; each possesses a thin, vertical steel strip that divides the window into two large panes of glass, and each has a brick sill. The pedestrian entrance has modern metal doors, transom, and sidelights and is most likely located where the original vehicle entrance once was.

*P3b Resource Attributes: HP6 – one-story commercial building

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

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

*P6. Date Constructed/Age and Source: ■ Historic ☐ Prehistoric ☐ Both
1914-1915; building permit

*P7. Owner and Address:
DIRECTOR OF PROPERTY
25 VAN NESS AVE
SAN FRANCISCO CA 94102

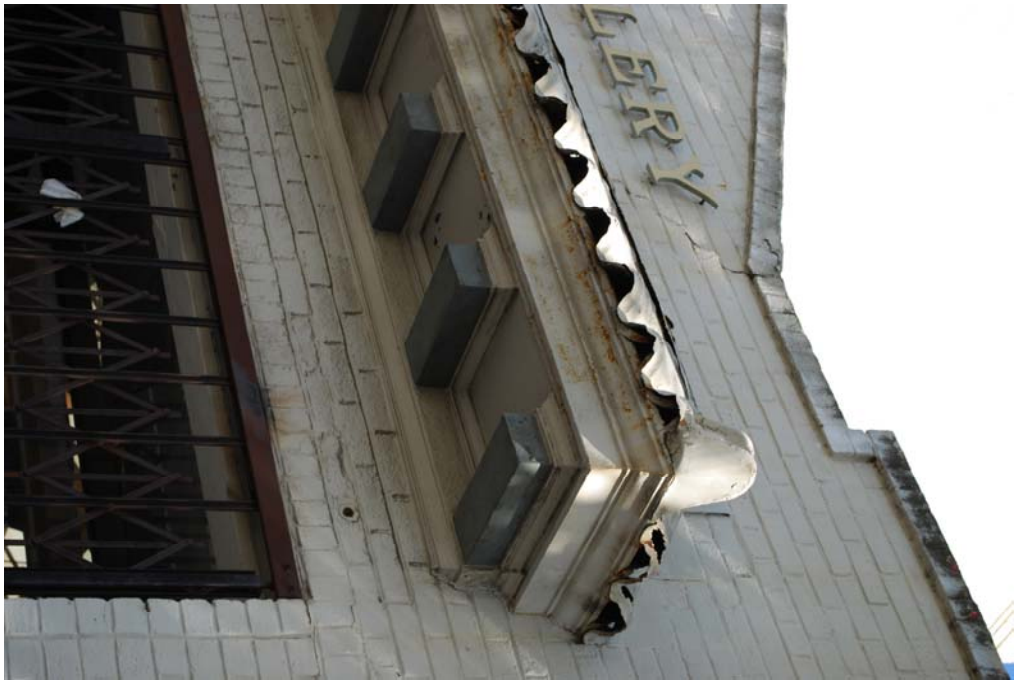
*P8. Recorded by: (Name, affiliation, and address)
William Kostura
P. O. Box 60211
Palo Alto, CA 94306

*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)



Top: Cornice detail
Below: Painted sign on west wall

BUILDING, STRUCTURE, AND OBJECT RECORD

***NRHP Status Code** 3CS

***Resource Name or #** (Assigned by recorder) 155 Grove Street

B1. Historic Name: Harry M. Nicolson auto repair shop

B2. Common Name: S. F. Art Commission Gallery

B3. Original Use: auto repair B4. Present Use: art gallery

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

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

Built in 1914-1915. Window sash altered in 1937.

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

***B8. Related Features:**

none

B9a. Architect: William H. Crim, Jr. b. Builder: unknown

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

Period of Significance 1915-1937 **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 constructed in 1914-1915 for owner John McConaghy, to designs by architect William H. Crim, Jr. It was built after other automobile-related buildings across the street had been demolished to make way for the new City Hall. This building had automobile repair and similar uses from the time of its completion until about 1943. The first and longest-term occupant was Harry M. Nicolson, who operated an auto repair shop here during 1915-1937. Nicolson was also the owner of a larger auto repair building at 300 Grove Street; but he remained at 155 Grove as a renter while he rented out 300 Grove to other auto repair shop owners.

Subsequent auto uses of 155 Grove include Lambert Co., Ltd., auto parts (1938), Civic Center auto painting (1940), and R. A. Solis, auto repair (1943). Thus, known auto repair uses of this building total about 23 years, and all auto-related uses of this building total about 25 years. Occupants of this building over the next decade are unknown. Subsequently, from 1953 to at least 1964, this building was used as a repair shop by D. Zelinsky and Sons, painters, whose main shop was next door at 165 Grove (now demolished).

(See Continuation Sheet, page 4.)

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

***B12. References:**

Building permit #58969 (December 1, 1914), 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, 1915-1964

1929 Sanborn insurance map: auto repair

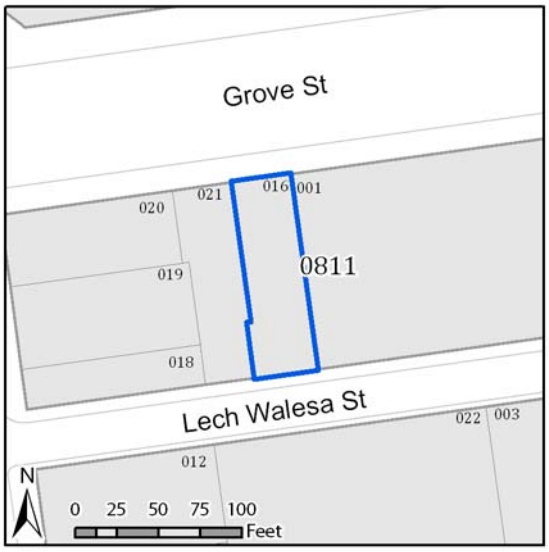
B13. Remarks:

***B14. Evaluator:** William Kostura

Date of Evaluation: July 2009

(This space reserved for official comments.)

(Sketch map with north arrow required)



History (continued)

A building permit dated 1937 states that the proposed work was to "remove present metal sash in front and install plate glass." It sounds like industrial steel sash of many lights must have once filled the storefront windows, and that the existing window frame must date to 1937.

The architect, William H. Crim, Jr., trained in San Francisco as a draftsman with George W. Percy and Henry H. Meyers during 1900-1903 and opened his own office in partnership with Earle B. Scott in 1906. The firm of Crim and Scott continued to 1911 and produced some important work, including the Mission Savings Bank, in the Mission Revival style, at 498 Valencia (1909); and a fine French style apartment building at 830 Powell (1910). Crim worked solo from 1911 until his death in 1930, and produced many notable buildings, including the Tobacco Company of California building at 1 South Park (1913); the Second Church of Christ, Scientist, at 651-655 Dolores (1917); the Los Gatos Town Hall (before 1919); the Los Angeles Soap Company building at 599 Second Street (1923); the El Capitan theater, at 2353 Mission (1928); Presidio Middle School (1929-1930); and the Art Deco style James Lick Middle School (designed 1930, completed after his death).

Automobile-related buildings by Crim include a public garage at 64 Golden Gate Avenue (Crim and Scott, 1910; extant); a rather finer public garage at 618-634 Stanyan (Crim and Scott, 1911; extant); and the United States Tire Co. store, in the form of a small, classical temple, at 636 Van Ness (ca. 1911; demolished). In the overall context of Crim's career, 155 Grove should be considered a minor example of his work.

Integrity

The loss of the original storefront window sash in 1937 is a substantial alteration, and the building had only brief auto-related use after this date. These windows, along with the new pedestrian entrance in the former vehicle entrance, constitute a large percentage of the area of the façade. The rest of the building remains intact. All of the other light industrial buildings that once stood on the south side of Grove Street, between Polk and Van Ness, and around the corner on Van Ness, have either been demolished or heavily altered.

Generally, the building still evokes its original use as an automobile repair shop. In sum, the building retains integrity of location, design, feeling, and association. It has diminished integrity of materials and workmanship. Regarding integrity of setting, this is also diminished by the loss of early buildings that were adjacent or nearby on the south side of Grove Street and on Van Ness Avenue.

(See Continuation Sheet, page 5.)

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*.

Completed in 1915, this is the oldest building in the study area that was built as an automobile repair shop. Only one building in the study area had an earlier use as an auto repair shop, and that building (1415 Van Ness) was not originally built for automobile use. 155 Grove is undoubtedly also one of the oldest auto repair shops in San Francisco. With at least 23 years of known auto repair use in its history, it has good longevity in this use. For this reason, the building appears to be eligible for the California Register of Historical Resources under Criterion 1, for its early use as an auto repair shop. The Period of Significance under this criterion is 1915 to 1937, the years Harry Nicolson used the building as his shop.

Compared to other auto repair shop owners who worked in this field for even longer than Nicolson did, and who occupied larger buildings (and thus probably did a larger amount of business), Nicolson's personal history as an auto repairman does not appear to have importance. 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, its brick surface, the shape of its parapet, the pent roof with modillions at the base of the parapet, and the size and shape of the window and entrance openings. The sash and frames within these openings are not contributors to the historic building.