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) 1535-1599 Market Street/10 South Van Ness

P1. Historic name of building (if any): Les Vogel Chevrolet 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 Location: *a: County San Francisco ☐ Not for Publication ■ Unrestricted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 1535-1599 Market Street City San Francisco Zip 94103
d. UTM: Zone _____; _____mE/ _____ mN *e. Assessor's parcel #: Block 3506, lot 4

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

This stucco clad, reinforced concrete building fills almost all of the triangular block bounded by Market Street, South Van Ness Avenue, and Twelfth Street. The building runs for 227' along Market, 344' along South Van Ness, and 315' along Twelfth. The only part of the block that is not part of this property is a very small lot at the gore of Twelfth and South Van Ness that is devoted to open space.

Most of the building is two stories in height. An exception is at the southernmost end of the building, which is one story. A portion that fronts on Twelfth Street and is slightly set back from Market Street rises to three stories.

(See Continuation Sheet, page 2.)

*P3b Resource Attributes: HP6 – two-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 along SVN June 2009

*P6. Date Constructed/Age and Source: ■ Historic ☐ Prehistoric ☐ Both
1927; building permit

*P7. Owner and Address:
BOAS FAMILY INVESTMENT
10 S VAN NESS AVE
SAN FRANCISCO CA 94103

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

*P9. Date Recorded: April 2010

*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, 2009.

*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)

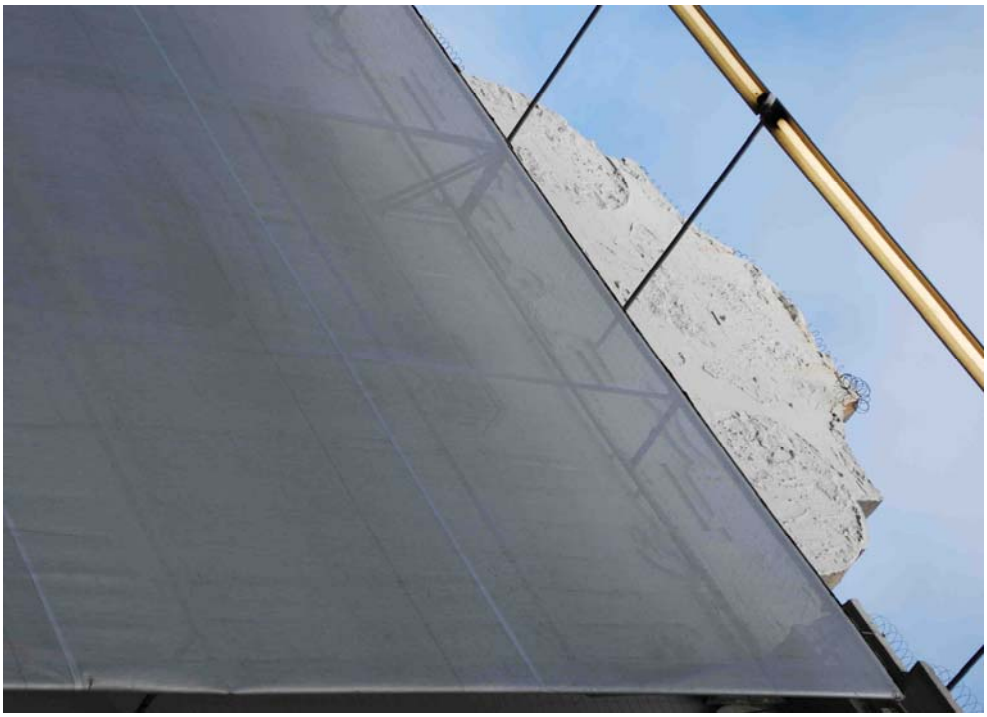
Description (continued):

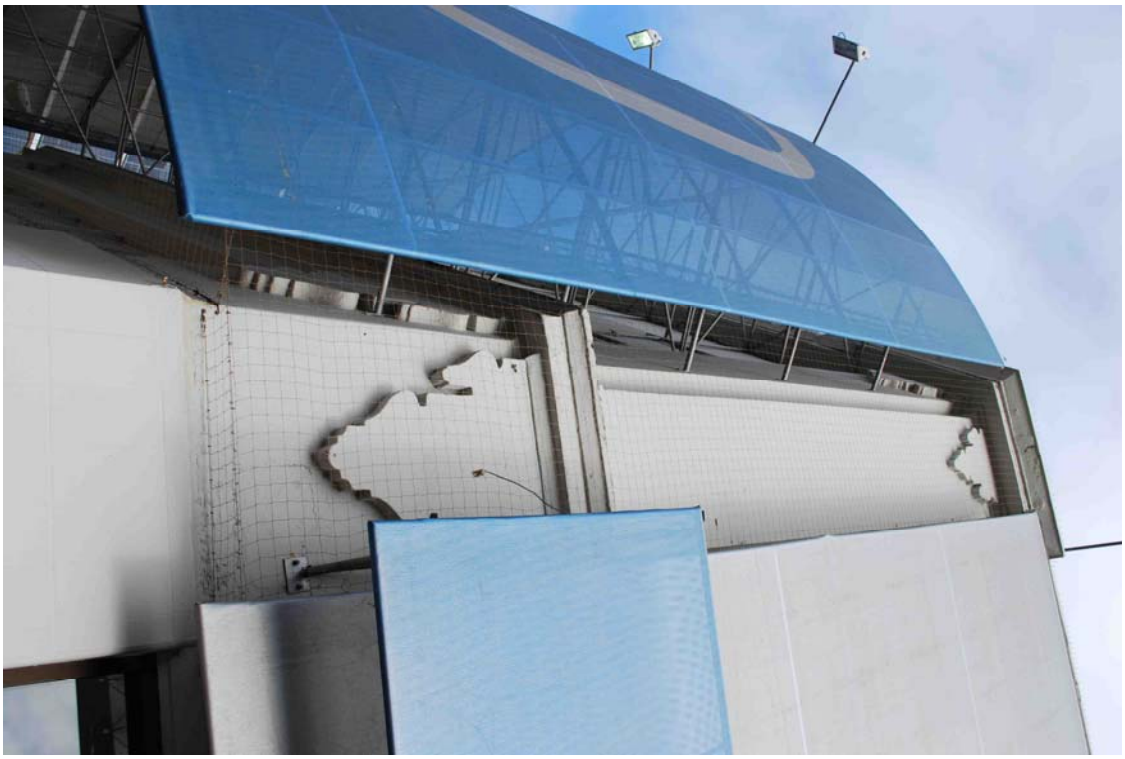
The dominant architectural motif of this building is a series of very large screens that were mounted on the Market and South Van Ness sides of the building after the mid-1980s. They cover the upper portions of these two facades, including all of the second story windows. The first story windows on these two facades remain uncovered. Nearly all of the latter windows have non-original metal sash or frames. A few windows at the south end of the South Van Ness side (in the one-story section) have their original industrial steel sash. The Twelfth Street side of the building is mostly unaltered; its windows remain uncovered and have their original industrial steel sash.

Gaps in the screens reveal the piers that divide the facades into bays. These piers are plain in their lower reaches but have some Spanish Colonial Revival style ornament at the cornice and second floor levels. Profiled caps top each pier at the cornice level. On the Market Street side, a parapet rises above the screens at one place. This parapet has been scraped clean of Spanish Colonial Revival style ornament.

Market Street side of the building

Top photo: South Van Ness side of the building
Bottom photo: Twelfth Street side of the building





Top photo: Parapet on the Market Street side; Spanish Colonial Revival ornament has been removed
Bottom photo: Pier detail on the Market Street side, near South Van Ness; ornament and moldings here remain intact

BUILDING, STRUCTURE, AND OBJECT RECORD

***NRHP Status Code** 6Z

***Resource Name or #** (Assigned by recorder) 1535-1599 Market Street/10 South Van Ness

B1. Historic Name: Les Vogel Chevrolet showroom

B2. Common Name: San Francisco Honda

B3. Original Use: auto showroom B4. Present Use: auto showroom

***B5. Architectural Style:** Spanish Colonial Revival

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

Built in 1927. Windows altered and ornament removed after the mid-1980s.

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

***B8. Related Features:**

none

B9a. Architect: Clarence Tantau b. Builder: Dinwiddie Construction Co.

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

Period of Significance n/a **Property Type** auto showroom **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 – Construction and architect

This building was built in 1927 as an investment for B. F. Schlesinger and Mortimer and Herbert Fleishhacker, to designs by architect Clarence Tantau, an architect who was noted for a small number of fine residences but who did little commercial work that is known of.

The building was originally devoted to multiple uses, a few of which were auto-related. The 1929 Sanborn insurance map shows that the only part of the building that was devoted to an automobile showroom then was a small corner at the gore of Market and South Van Ness. Eight small storefronts occupied the balance of the Market Street side. A large furniture warehouse stretched from 20 South Van Ness to the Twelfth Street side. The south end of the building, and a portion of the upper story and roof, were devoted to the garage of the Yellow Cab Company. An auto painting shop occupied the third story of the building. The 1948 Sanborn map reveals changes of use. Then, almost all of the building was devoted to auto sales, repair, service, and parking. Aside from these uses, only one small storefront remained on Market Street, and a dance hall occupied the partial third story. *(Continued next page.)*

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

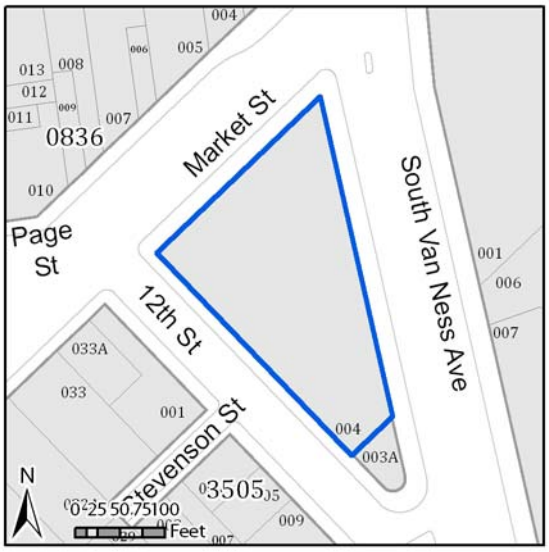
***B12. References:**

Building permit #157215, January 28, 1927.
Crocker-Langley and Polk's city directory, and PT&T reverse directory listings for occupants of this building, 1929-1964
1929 and 1948 Sanborn insurance maps

B13. Remarks:

***B14. Evaluator:** William Kostura
Date of Evaluation: April 2010

(Sketch map with north arrow required)



(This space reserved for official comments.)

History -- Occupants

Known automobile showrooms in this building included:

1929: Harry J. Lee, sales of Durant automobiles

This very short-lived dealership sold autos made by William C. Durant, who had been the founder of Chevrolet and was twice the head of General Motors. Lee's showroom occupied only the small storefront at the corner of Market Street and South Van Ness.

1933-1934: Les Vogel, used cars

Vogel had previously been the sales manager of Kresteller Motors, on upper Market Street. His used car salesroom was at 1599 Market Street, in a space that had previously been devoted to several storefronts.

1935-1961: Les Vogel, Chevrolet dealer

Vogel used his earlier experience at Kresteller and in used car sales to acquire this Chevrolet dealership. His became one of four major Chevrolet dealerships in the city during the 1930s-1960s. After 1961, Les Vogel moved his Chevrolet dealership to another building in San Francisco. There is currently a Les Vogel Chrysler dealership in Burlingame.

The Chevrolet brand of automobile was founded in 1911 by William C. Durant, the former head of General Motors, and Louis Chevrolet, a famous racing car driver. Durant bought out his partner in 1915, regained control of General Motors in 1916, and brought Chevrolet into GM in 1918. For many years Chevrolet was one of the leading budget-priced cars in the United States, along with Ford.

In San Francisco through the 1960s, there were three periods of Chevrolet dealerships: 1) The 1910s was a period of little stability, as several successive dealerships lasted only a few months to a couple years each. 2) By contrast, from 1920 to 1933 one dealership, that of the Anderson-Smith Motor Company (later, Robert A. Smith) was dominant; after 1921 it was the only Chevrolet dealership in San Francisco. 3) Finally, when Smith went out of business, he was succeeded by multiple dealerships, some of which lasted for decades. Those of Ernest Ingold and Don Gilmore were founded in 1933, and Les Vogel followed in 1935. All of these were located on Van Ness Avenue or on South Van Ness. Later in the 1930s a few Chevrolet dealerships were begun in other parts of San Francisco. From the mid-1930s to the mid-1950s the dealerships of Ernest Ingold and Les Vogel were by far the largest.

1963-1964: Waters Buick

James F. Waters had a long career as a San Francisco auto dealer. From 1930 to 1963 he sold DeSoto and Plymouth autos, first at 550-590 Van Ness and then at 1395 Van Ness. Then in 1963 he moved to the subject building and began selling Buicks. How long he remained here after 1964 has not been researched. By 1981, however, Boas Motors was selling Pontiac autos here. Since the 1990s the building has been occupied by San Francisco Honda.

(Continued next page.)

History – Occupants (continued)

Other businesses

A portion of this building, most likely the partial third story, became the El Patio Ballroom during the early 1930s. This place of entertainment continued under the El Patio name through the 1950s, then became the Carousel Ballroom in the early 1960s. According to Wikipedia, this same ballroom was later Fillmore West, the rock music hall run by Bill Graham. Both Wikipedia and Jay Hansen's *The Other Guide to San Francisco* (Chronicle Books, 1980; p. 67; no sources cited) state that Fillmore West ran from 1968 to 1971.

A small restaurant known as Lindy's Sandwich shop occupied a small storefront in this building during at least 1940-1959, and probably other years as well.

Historic context

Chevrolet showrooms in San Francisco

The most important aspect of this building's automotive history, by far, is the period from 1935-1961, when it was occupied by Les Vogel's Chevrolet dealership. Vogel was one of the city's two largest Chevrolet dealers during these years, along with Ernest Ingold; although Don Gilmore also had a long-running Chevrolet dealership during this time, and Ellis Brooks was becoming important toward the end of that period. The buildings in the study area of this report that reflect this history include:

1535-1599 Market/10 South Van Ness (the building being evaluated here): Chevrolet autos sold here by Les Vogel during 1935-1961.

999 Van Ness: Chevrolet sold here by Ernest Ingold and his successor George Olsen during 1937-1970s (extant). It is the largest showroom of this group.

550-590 Van Ness: Chevrolet sold here by Don Gilmore during 1936-1954 (extant).

1595 Van Ness: sold here by Ellis Brooks during 1955-1963 (extant).

1535-1599 Market Street has, by a wide margin, the least integrity among this group of buildings.

Historic context – early rock music halls in San Francisco

Besides the subject building, two important rock music halls of the 1960s still stand in San Francisco. They are Fillmore Auditorium, which was run by Bill Graham at the southwest corner of Geary Boulevard and Fillmore Street during 1965-1968; and the Avalon Ballroom, which was run by Chet Helms at the northeast corner of Van Ness Avenue and Sutter Street during the mid-to-late 1960s. Both of those buildings retain their 1960s appearance, whereas the subject building does not. (A later hall in San Francisco that was associated with the rock music scene in the 1970s, Winterland, at Post and Steiner streets, has been torn down.)

Integrity

This building has integrity of location, but due to its alterations – primarily the screens over the second story, but also the removal of ornament – it has greatly diminished integrity of design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. Due to new construction in the vicinity (since the 1960s) it has also lost integrity of setting.

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 1927, this is a moderately early example of an automobile showroom. With 28 years of such use in its history, it has good longevity in this use. Counting used car sales, it has 30 years of total auto-related use, for excellent longevity. However, the integrity of this building is fair-to-poor, at best. Another large Chevrolet showroom of the 1930s-1960s, Ernest Ingold's, at 999 Van Ness, has very high integrity and is a much better example of a Chevrolet showroom for this period. Accordingly, this building does not appear to be eligible for the California Register of Historical Resources under Criterion 1 for its history as an automobile showroom.

No other building in San Francisco represents the early career of Les Vogel, who was long an important auto dealer in San Francisco. Nevertheless, due to this building's general loss of integrity, it does not appear to be eligible for the California Register under Criterion 2, for its association with Ingold.

A study of this building's history as a place of entertainment is beyond the scope of this report, and so no formal evaluation of the building under this aspect of its history is being made here. The likelihood that it might be eligible for the California Register under criteria 1 or 2 for this history seems low, however, due to loss of integrity.

Architecturally, this building's lines have been obscured by screens, and most of its ornament has been similarly obscured or removed; and thus it does not appear to be eligible for the California Register under Criterion 3, for its design.

Top photo: 1535-1599 Market Street in 1964, when Waters Buick and the Carousel Ballroom occupied the building. From the SF Public Library, photo AAD-4726.

Bottom photo: The building in 1976. In this photo, one can clearly see Spanish Colonial Revival ornament in the parapet that has since been scraped away. It is unknown whether the second story window sash, and the moldings around them, survive behind the screens that now obscure these windows. In the first story, the storefront window transoms have been removed, and the central entrance has been completely altered. At right is the partial third story that was the probable location of the El Patio, Carousel, and Fillmore West ballrooms. Photo from the Department of City Planning's 1976 survey of historic buildings.