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) 1350 Van Ness Avenue/1465 Bush St.

P1. Historic name of building (if any): Cosbie-Peacock-Borie auto 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 Location: *a: County San Francisco ☐ Not for Publication ■ Unrestricted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 1350 Van Ness Avenue/1465 Bush St. City San Francisco Zip 94109
d. UTM: Zone _____; _____mE/ ___ mN *e. Assessor's parcel #: Block 670, lots 16 and 19

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

This one-story building was described in a published building notice of 1912 as being constructed of brick, wood and concrete. The building is T-shaped and occupies two lots. The primary wing, originally an automobile showroom, fronts on Van Ness Avenue with a width of 40' by a depth of 84'. The crossing wing at the rear, originally used as auto service and repair in support of the showroom, is 25 feet in width and stretches 120 feet from Bush Street to Fern Street. Each of the three facades has a different treatment. The main façade on Van Ness Avenue is Classical Revival in style and is clad in stucco; the Bush Street façade is utilitarian in character and is clad in stucco; and the Fern Street façade, also utilitarian, is faced in brick.

(See Continuation Sheet, page 2.)

*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 east at 1350 Van Ness Ave. façade, June 2009

*P6. Date Constructed/Age and Source: ■ Historic ☐ Prehistoric ☐ Both
1912-1913; published building notice

*P7. Owner and Address:
BRAUNSTEIN LIVING TRUST 199
770 TAMPALPAIS DR #401B
CORTE MADERA CA 94925

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

*P9. Date Recorded: November 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)

Description (continued):

In composition, the main façade on Van Ness is divided into three bays, with a central entrance flanked by storefront windows. Each bay is defined by, and divided from the others, by fluted pilasters with composite (Ionic and Corinthian) capitals and profiled bases. Scroll modillions flare out from the top of each capital. Each pilaster is backed up by a pier whose stucco surface is lightly scored to resemble masonry. Greek clathri screens fill the transom area of the entrance and of the adjoining storefront windows. The windows have aluminum frames set in the original openings, and the central glass entrance also has replacement aluminum framing. A low bulkhead can be found at the base of each window. The cornice and frieze area is generally altered.

The Bush Street façade reads as two stories in height and is divided into two bays by narrow piers. The stucco surface is lightly scored to resemble masonry and is devoid of ornament, which seems to be the original treatment. Windows in each bay are divided by mullions into a 3 x 3 grid, each part of which is divided by wooden muntins into six lights. At left is a non-original roll-up vehicle door. At right is a pedestrian entrance with an original wooden door and transom. The door has two-thirds length glazing and classically-styled ornament.

The Fern Street façade is faced in brick, also reads as two stories, and is also divided into two bays by narrow piers. Second story windows are very similar to those on Bush Street except that they are divided into a 3 x 4 grid. In the first story a three-part window is at left (with glazing now replaced by solid panels) and a non-original roll-up metal vehicle entrance door is at right.

To sum up, the Van Ness façade is altered in the cornice and frieze area and at the central entrance, and is otherwise intact; while the secondary facades on Bush and Fern are generally intact save for the vehicle entrances.

Detail of the Van Ness Avenue facade

Top photo: Bush Street façade. Bottom photo: Fern Street façade.

BUILDING, STRUCTURE, AND OBJECT RECORD

***NRHP Status Code** 3CS

***Resource Name or #** (Assigned by recorder) 1350 Van Ness Avenue/1465 Bush St.

B1. Historic Name: Cosbie-Peacock-Borie auto showroom

B2. Common Name: _____

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

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

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

Built in 1912-1913. Cornice and entry at 1350 Van Ness altered at an unknown date.

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

***B8. Related Features:**

none

B9a. Architect: George Applegarth b. Builder: J. W. Carr

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

Period of Significance 1913-1964 **Property Type** auto showroom **Applicable Criteria** 1

(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 1912-1913 for Dr. G. H. Palmer as an investment. The first public announcement of the proposed building was in October 1912. At the time a two-story-plus-basement reinforced concrete auto salesroom was planned, to designs by architects MacDonald and Applegarth. By December, however, the plans had been scaled down for a one story building, and the design was by George Applegarth, after his breakup with his long time partner MacDonald.

The architect, Applegarth, had studied in the 1890s under his uncle George Sanders, of the prominent Victorian-era firm Wright and Sanders. He then attended the Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris and returned to San Francisco immediately after the earthquake and fire of 1906. In partnership with Kenneth MacDonald, Jr. he designed dozens of office and loft buildings in the downtown area as well as many fine houses in Pacific Heights, Presidio Heights, and Presidio Terrace. He is best known for the Palace of the Legion of Honor in Lincoln Park, the Spreckels mansion at 2080 Washington, the older part of the Clift Hotel, and the Eastern Outfitting building at 1017-1021 Market Street. *(See Continuation Sheet, page 5.)*

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

***B12. References:**

Bldg & Industrial News, Oct. 22, 1912, 7:1; and Dec. 10, 1912, 20:1
Architect and Engineer, May 1913, p. 56.
Crocker-Langley and Polk's city directory, and PT&T reverse directory listings for occupants of this building, 1914-1964
1913 Sanborn insurance map (auto sales at #1350; auto repair in the T at 1469 Bush and 168 Fern)
1929 Sanborn insurance map (store at #1350; tire service in the T)

B13. Remarks:

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

(This space reserved for official comments.)

(Sketch map with north arrow required)

History: Construction and architect (continued)

MacDonald and Applegarth as a partnership, and George Applegarth on his own designed six automobile-related buildings in the study area of this report. Aside from the subject building they have all been demolished or radically altered. In chronological order they include:

White Co. auto and truck showroom and garage, 1470-1478 Market/50-60 Van Ness (M&A, 1908)
H. O. Harrison's Peerless auto showroom, 1200 Van Ness Avenue (M&A, 1911)
Fisk Rubber Co. tires salesroom, 1431 Van Ness Avenue (M&A, 1911-1912)
Paul Bancroft building (auto showrooms, auto supplies), 1230-1250 Van Ness (M&A, 1912-1913)
Brooks building, 826 Van Ness Avenue (Applegarth, 1918).

The T-shape of this building reflects the early period of auto showroom design, when service and repair departments were sometimes separated from the sales rooms through location in subordinate wings. Later, when auto showrooms became much larger, this segregation of uses was accomplished by putting service and repair departments in the upper floors of buildings.

History: Occupants of the building

Auto showrooms occupied this building for its first nine years, from 1913-1922. The auto showroom was always in the front part of the building, facing Van Ness, while the service, repair, and parts departments were in the wing fronting on Bush and Fern streets. The showrooms included:

1913-1914: The A. B. Cosby Motor Co. sold Stutz automobiles here during these two years. A drawing of this building by George Applegarth, made during the design process, shows Cosby as the occupant, and thus it seems certain that Cosby committed to a lease before the building was constructed. Stutz was founded in Indianapolis, Indiana in 1911 and manufactured automobiles until 1935. The company entered one of its cars in the Indianapolis 500 race its very first year and continued to enter important races (such as Le Mans) and to set world speed records in order to promote its reputation as a fast and powerful car marketed to the wealthy. The Stutz Bearcat was perhaps its best known model. A retouched photo of this building published in the *San Francisco Newsletter* (Christmas edition, 1913) shows Ohio Electric autos in addition to Stutz being sold here.

Stutz autos were sold in San Francisco from the founding of the company in 1911 to at least 1933. Of the eight buildings in San Francisco where Stutz was sold, two survive with good integrity while six have been heavily altered or demolished. The other surviving building where this popular brand was sold is 1595 Van Ness Avenue, where sales of Stutz occurred during 1926-1928.

1915-1920: The Peacock Motor Sales Co. sold Chandler autos here during these years. The Chandler Motor Car Co. had been founded in Cleveland, Ohio in 1913 by Frederick C. Chandler, a former designer for Lozier, and by other former Lozier executives. Chandler built mid-priced cars and enjoyed growing popularity until its peak year, 1927. Its subsequent expansion resulted in debt that it could not overcome, and the company folded in 1929. At 1350 Van Ness, Peacock sold several models of Chandler, and in 1920 also offered the Cleveland, a low-priced automobile made by Chandler under a different name.

(Continued on next page.)

History: Occupants of the building (continued)

After 1920, and continuing to the demise of these brands in 1929, Chandler and Cleveland autos were sold at 1700 Van Ness Avenue. That building no longer stands.

1920-1922: L. J. Borie sold Templar autos here beginning May 1st, 1920. Based in Lakewood, Ohio, Templar made autos from 1917-1924. It was named after the Knights Templar and had a Maltese Cross for a logo. Production all but halted during World War I as the company turned its attention to war production, but during 1920-1921 Templar became very popular, offering several models. In 1922, however, a fire destroyed their factory. Templar refinanced the next year, but folded in 1924 as their funds became exhausted. Templar's peak years of success correspond with the years their cars were sold here by L. J. Borie. This is the only building in San Francisco where Templars are known to have been sold

To recapitulate this building's nine-year history of new auto sales, it was home to showrooms selling one brand of automobile that was nationally important and is still well-remembered today (Stutz) and two brands that were briefly popular and are now less remembered (Chandler and Templar). Besides 1350 Van Ness, one other building with good integrity (1595 Van Ness) survives where Stutz was sold, albeit at a later period in Stutz's history; and no other buildings stand where Chandler or Templar autos were sold.

L. J. Borie was the last dealer of new automobiles in this building. After he left, during the 1920s-1940s, this building's space was usually divided among two different businesses. At a given time, one occupant of the building during these years was usually auto-related and the other was not auto-related (or was only marginally so). Later, during the 1950s and 1960s, this building returned to single occupancy by auto firms. The auto-related businesses during these decades included:

1923-1930: Lee Tire and Rubber Company. Lee was apparently a national brand and this was a local outlet for them.

1933: Stehr piston rings sales and service

1944: Ellis Brooks, used car sales. Brooks sold used cars at several locations in the 1940s before becoming an important Chevrolet dealer in 1955.

1945-1946: Val Culwell, used car sales

1946: Neal McNeil, S. F. Used Car Exchange

1947: San Francisco Wholesale Automobile Co., used car sales

1948: Young-Johnson Motor Co., used car sales

1951-1953: Royal Motor Sales, used car sales

(Continued next page.)

History: Occupants of the building (continued)

1954: Crivello Motors, used car sales

1955: Van Ness Used Cars

1957-1960, and 1962: William L. Hughson, used car sales. Hughson was the most important Ford dealer in San Francisco's history. During these several years he also sold used cars at 1415 Van Ness.

1961: Bill Braver, used car sales

1963: Frank's Quality Motors, used car sales

1964: N&H Motors, used car sales

Concurrently through 1949, trunk manufacturers also occupied part of this building. From 1926 to 1940 W. R. Malm and Co. manufactured and sold trunks here; during the 1920s and early 1930s they sold "automobile trunks," according to city directories. These may have been trunks that were made to attach to the rear of an automobile. From 1942 to 1949 C. A. Malm and Co. made and sold trunks and luggage from this building. There is no indication that their product was particularly geared to automobile use.

To summarize, this building had nine years of use as a new automobile showroom (1913-1922), eight years of uses as a tires sales store (1923-1930), 18 years of use as a used auto sales room (during 1944-1964), and 35 years of known auto-related use of all kinds (not counting auto trunk manufacturing).

History: Alterations

A drawing by the architect of this building's main façade (see below) and a small photograph of the building published in 1913 both show that the main facade once had a classical cornice topped by Spanish clay tiles, a blank frieze for signage, and an entrance with sidelights and transom. These were removed an unknown date.

Integrity

The primary façade on Van Ness Avenue retains its classical pilasters, the piers that back the pilasters, the clathri-patterned transoms, and the low bulkheads at the base of each window. The windows are unaltered save for the substitution of new perimeter frames for the original ones. The main losses to this façade have been the cornice and frieze; and the entrance door, transom, and sidelights.

The Bush Street and Fern Street facades retain their original windows and cladding (of stucco and brick, respectively), and the Bush Street façade also retains its original pedestrian door. These simple facades appear to be generally unaltered save for the substitution of new roll-up vehicle doors for the originals.

In sum, the most important façade on this building is about one-third altered, while the two lesser facades are essentially intact. Overall, this building retains integrity of location, setting, feeling, and association, while integrity of design, materials and workmanship are somewhat 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.*

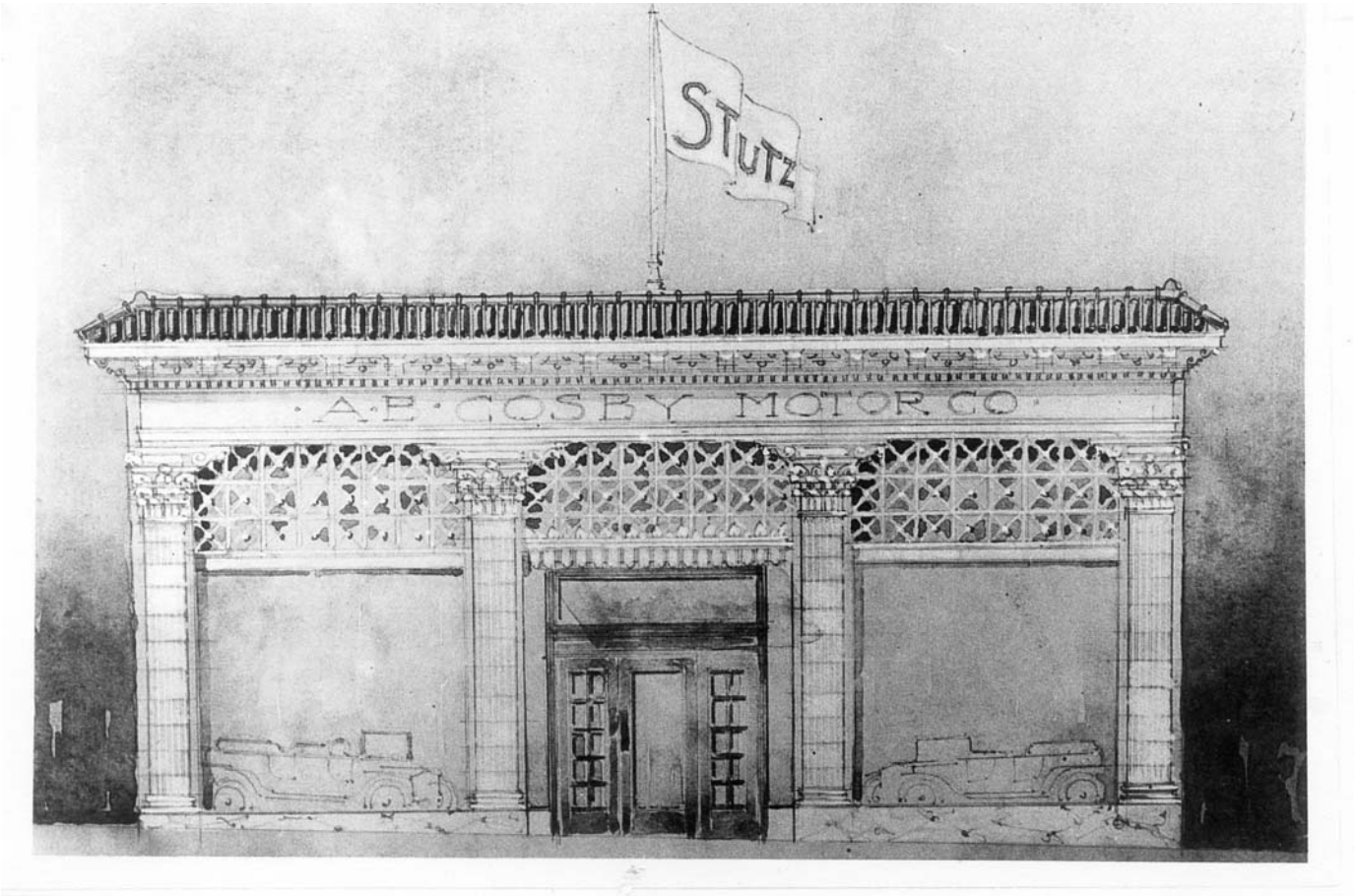
Completed in 1913, this is an early example of an automobile showroom. With nine years of such use in its history, it had fair longevity in this use. This building had 35 years of total auto-related use (through 1964), for excellent longevity of such use. In addition to the above, this building is important as the earlier of two surviving buildings where Stutz autos was sold; and is also important, though less so, as the only remaining building where two other once-popular auto brands – Chandler and Templar – were sold. These combined factors outweigh the fact that approximately one-third of the main façade has been altered. For these reasons, the building appears to be eligible for the California Register of Historical Resources under Criterion 1, at the local level, both for its early use as an automobile showroom and for its general auto-related uses. The Period of Significance under this criterion is 1913-1964, the years the building had these uses.

No one auto dealer in this building's history stands out in his field. Accordingly, this building does not appear to be eligible for the California Register under Criterion 2.

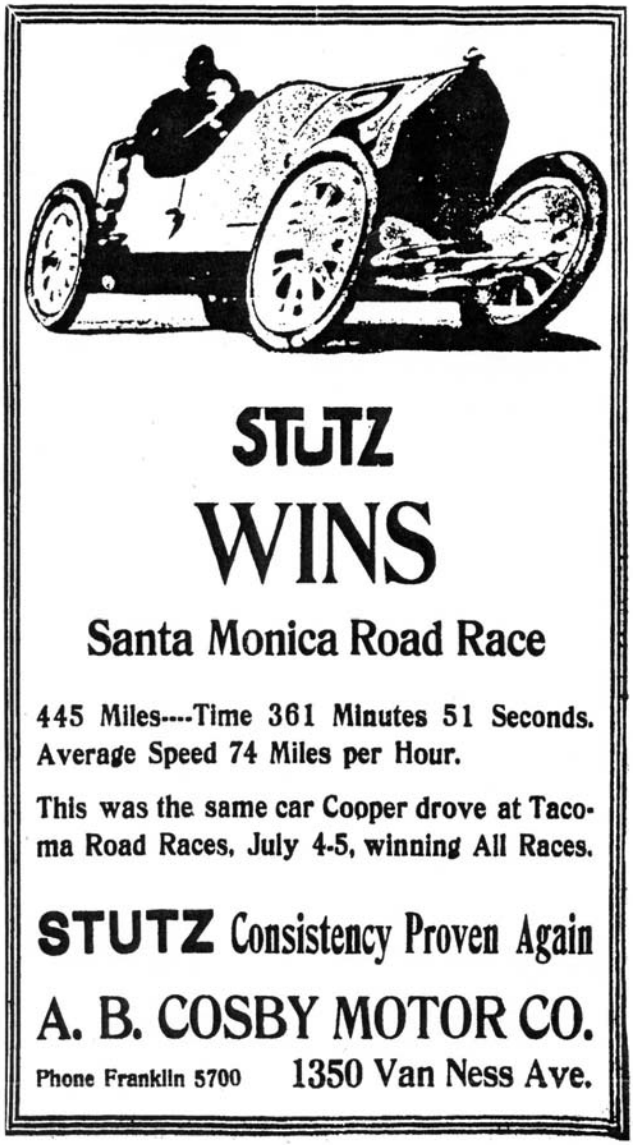
This building's Classical Revival main façade, once very fine, has lost much of its excellence through the loss of its cornice and the alteration of its frieze. Another aspect of its design remains intact, namely, its T shape, which enabled auto dealers here to segregate the sales room from their service and repair departments through the use of wings. This building is thus distinguished from larger auto showrooms, which used multiple stories to achieve such separation of uses. On balance, due to alterations to the main façade, 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 the height and width of each wing (Van Ness, Bush, Fern), plus the following features of the three facades: On Van Ness Avenue, the clathri pattern in the three transoms, the four fluted pilasters with composite capitals, the modillions that extend from these capitals, the piers with scored stucco facing that back up the pilasters, and the low bulkheads at the base of the windows. On Bush Street: the stucco surface of the façade, the piers that define the two bays, the 3 x 3 windows in each bay, the muntins that divide each window section into six lights, and the original pedestrian door. On Fern Street: The brick facing of the façade, the brick piers that define the two bays, the 3 x 4 windows in each bay, and the muntins that divide each window section into six lights.



Drawing of the Van Ness Avenue façade by George Applegarth. Collection of William Kostura. This drawing was published in the article "Some of the Work of G. A. Applegarth, Architect," in *Architect and Engineer*, May 1913, p. 56, and captioned "Automobile Building for the Stutz Company, San Francisco, Dr. G. H. Palmer, Owner."



Advertisements for the first two occupants of this building. At left, an ad for the A. B. Cosby Motor Co., emphasizing the speed and power of Stutz autos. *San Francisco Chronicle*, August 10, 1913, p. 57. At right, an ad for the Peacock Motor Sales Co., emphasizing the style and comfort of this mid-priced Chandler coupe. *San Francisco Chronicle*, September 28, 1919, p. 44.