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) 1430-1480 Van Ness Avenue

P1. Historic name of building (if any): Vanpine Realty Company Building

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 Location: *a: County San Francisco ☐ **Not for Publication** ■ **Unrestricted**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 1430-1480 Van Ness Avenue City San Francisco Zip 94109

d. UTM: Zone _____; _____mE/ _____ mN ***e. Assessor's parcel #:** Block 667, lot 11

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

This one-story-plus-basement, reinforced concrete building fills its 120' by 96'-6" lot, which runs along the east side of Van Ness Avenue, from Austin Street to Pine Street. The building is coated with stucco that has been lightly scored to resemble masonry. In composition, the Van Ness Avenue facade is divided by pilasters into three pavilions, or bays, of equal or nearly equal width. Currently, each of these pavilions is devoted to a separate storefront, although in this building's past, one or two of these pavilions were divided into two storefronts each. On the Pine Street side, pilasters form two narrow bays, one at either end of the façade, leaving a wide middle section that is five windows in width. On the Austin Street side, pilasters form one bay, adjacent to Van Ness Avenue, leaving the rest of the façade as a single section.

(See Continuation Sheet, page 2.)

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

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

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

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

***P7. Owner and Address:**
1430 VAN NESS PARTNERS
768 FUNSTON AVE
SAN FRANCISCO CA 94118

***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)

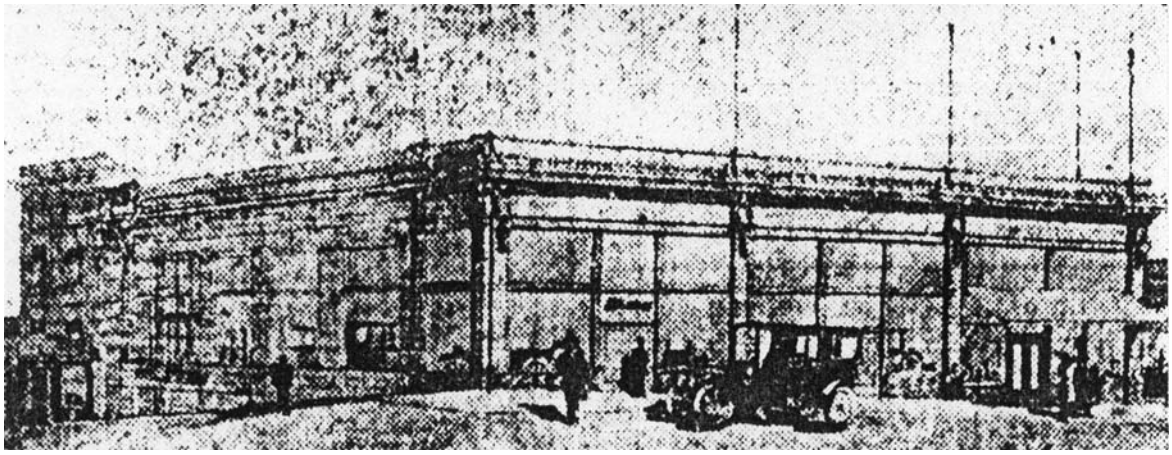
Description (continued):

The composition of the building is unified by the treatment at the top of the building, which wraps around all three facades. From the top down the elements of this zone include: a low parapet, a profiled cornice, a course of egg-and-dart molding, a course of dentils, a blank frieze, and a secondary cornice molding of three layers. These features wrap around the slightly projecting pilasters that divide the composition into pavilions or bays. Very small pineapples can be found in the dentil course at the corners formed by these pilasters.

Each of the three pavilions facing Van Ness Avenue has a central entrance flanked by storefront windows. Each of these windows and entrances has replacement aluminum frames or sash. The northernmost of these pavilions has a transom window over the storefront windows, although the corresponding area over its entrance is filled in. The entire transom area in each of the other two pavilions is also filled in. On the Pine Street side, all windows have replacement frames, presumably of aluminum; these windows and frames have been painted over. On the Austin Street side, the last two original windows in this building can be found. These are divided by transom bars, mullions, and muntins into many lights.

There are two vehicle entrances in this building, one at the east end of the Pine Street façade, and one in the east end of the Austin Street façade, each in the basement level, and each with a replacement door.

A drawing of this building published in the *San Francisco Chronicle* (see below) at the time construction commenced shows that the each of the three pavilions facing Van Ness had a central entrance flanked by storefront windows, as is the case now. However, each also had a transom window that spanned the width of the pavilion, over the storefront windows and entrance. It is clear that most of this transom area has since been filled in.



Drawing of the building from the *San Francisco Chronicle*, February 10, 1912, p. 8.

Details of the northernmost (at top) and southernmost storefronts

Pine Street (at top) and Austin Street facades

Top photo: Cornice detail. Bottom photo: Original windows in the Austin Street façade.

BUILDING, STRUCTURE, AND OBJECT RECORD

***NRHP Status Code** 6Z

***Resource Name or #** (Assigned by recorder) 1430-1480 Van Ness Avenue

B1. Historic Name: Vanpine Realty Company Building

B2. Common Name: _____

B3. Original Use: auto showroom and auto supplies B4. Present Use: retail sales

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

***B6. Construction History:** (Construction date, alterations, and date of alterations)
Built in 1912. Windows and entrances altered at an unknown date.

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

***B8. Related Features:**
none

B9a. Architect: Sylvain Schnaittacher b. Builder: George Goodman Artificial Stone Company

***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

This building was built in four months, during February-June 1912, as an investment for the Vanpine Realty Company, about which nothing else is known. At the time construction began leases had already been signed for two of the four storefronts, one for an auto showroom and one for an auto supplies store, for terms of five and ten years.

History – the architect

Sylvain Schnaittacher (1874-1926) produced a large body of distinguished work during his career of almost thirty years in San Francisco. He was a native San Franciscan, trained locally, and apprenticed with architect A. Page Brown for several years, until the latter's death in 1896. Shortly afterward he opened his own practice, interrupted by a year-long tour of Europe to study the architecture of that continent.

(Continued next page.)

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

***B12. References:**

Building and Industrial News Feb. 6, 1912, 5:3 and Feb. 13, 1912, 17:3
SF *Chronicle*, February 10, 1912, p. 8.
Crocker-Langley and Polk's city directory, and PT&T reverse directory listings for occupants of this building, 1912-1964
1913 Sanborn insurance map (four storefronts: stores, auto sales, auto repair)
1929 Sanborn insurance map (auto sales, radio and auto supplies)
1948 Sanborn insurance map (five storefronts)

B13. Remarks:

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

(This space reserved for official comments.)

(Sketch map with north arrow required)

History – the architect (continued)

Schnaittacher's practice was diversified, including commercial, industrial, club, institutional, and residential buildings. His best-known work is Temple Emanu-El, designed in association with Bakewell and Brown. Other important works include the Argonaut Club at the northwest corner of Post and Powell (1909), the Harcourt Hotel at 1105 Larkin Street (1906), the Post Arms Apartments at 839 Post Street (1925), and the Musicians' Union Local No. 6, at 230 Jones Street (1924). Among his fine residences were several in Presidio Heights and a pair at 130 and 140 Sea Cliff Avenue (1920).

In the study area of this report, Schnaittacher also designed four other buildings, all very fine: the Paige automobile showroom at 1699 Van Ness Avenue (1919, 1923; extant), the Taxicab Company of California garage at 1270 Bush/1200 Larkin (1914; extant), Heald's College at 1201 Van Ness (1913; demolished), and the St. Francis Garage at 1240 Post (1916; demolished).

History – Occupants

Automobile-related uses predominated in this building for its first twenty years, through 1932. Auto supplies and accessories stores were the most frequent of these uses, followed by tire shops, used car sales, showrooms for new automobiles, and auto repair. In order to serve these businesses, the building was equipped with an elevator capable of transporting automobiles from the basement level to the first story. As far as is known, one elevator served all storefronts. An auto loans office was also here for many years. Among businesses that were unrelated to the auto industry, a branch Western-Union office was the longest lasting.

The building was initially divided into four storefronts. #1430 and #1436 were in the southernmost pavilion, #1440 was in the middle pavilion, and #1450 took up the northernmost pavilion. At an early date (by 1918) the middle pavilion was divided into two storefronts, #1440 and #1448.

Auto showrooms

It is evident that the owners of this building expected to lease these storefronts primarily to auto dealerships. This expectation was fulfilled mainly during the first two years of the building's history. One major brand, Stearns-Knight, was sold here, as was a moderately successful brand, Auburn. Obscure brands that were sold here included Matheson, Warren, Ames, and Marathon. The auto dealerships in this building included:

> 1912-1913: F. B. Stearns Company, at 1450 Van Ness. This was a factory branch of the F. B. Stearns Company, founded in 1898 in Cleveland, Ohio. This company was one of the earliest automakers in the United States and was known ca. 1910 for its auto racing and speed record exploits. In 1911 it began to build engines using the Knight sleeve valve design, which was noted for its quiet operation. The resulting luxury car was known as the Stearns-Knight. It was a successful brand through 1925, when it was sold to the Willys Overland Corporation; production continued under the Stearns-Knight name through 1929.
>
> In San Francisco, Stearns-Knight's factory branch was short-lived. By September 1913, it began to sell its autos through a local dealership at a different showroom on Van Ness Avenue.

(Continued next page.)

History – Occupants (continued)

1912: Matheson Sales Company, at 1440 Van Ness. This local dealership sold autos made by the Matheson Automobile Company, of Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania, and by the Warren company, of Detroit. Obviously hopeful about their new, central location, they left their other showrooms at 442 Van Ness, at Van Ness and Jackson, and in Oakland as soon as this building was ready for occupancy in June 1912. The national Matheson firm (founded in 1903) went into receivership in December 1912, however, apparently bringing this local dealership down with it.

1913-1914: Auburn Sales Company, at #1450. This local dealership sold the Auburn automobile, which had been founded in 1900 in Auburn, Indiana, by Frank and Morris Eckhart, sons of a wagonmaker. The brand was relatively successful until World War I material shortages put an end to production. It is best remembered for its post-World War I revival, especially the years (1925-1937) that it was owned by industrialist E. L. Cord, who turned the brand into a luxury automobile. In San Francisco, Auburn showrooms moved frequently, occupying at least five showrooms under three dealerships during 1910-1917.

1913: Ames Motor Sales Company, at #1440: This local dealership sold two auto brands, Ames and Marathon. Both were short-lived brands that are now considered obscure. Marathon traced its history to 1889, when the Southern Engine and Boiler Works was founded in Nashville, Tennessee. The firm expanded its line to make automobiles under the Southern brand name during 1907-1910, then changed the brand name to Marathon. Southern's large factory and its brilliant engineer William Henry Collier made all of the auto parts, resulting in a national reputation for quality and durability. Marathon became very popular, but then imploded due to production and financial mismanagement. It failed in 1914.

The other brand sold at #1440, Ames, was made by the Ames Motor Car Company in Owensborough, Kentucky during 1910-1915. Its founder, Frederick A. Ames, had previously manufactured buggies and carriages. According to this brand's entry in Wikipedia, production was very modest, only 50 cars per month for the life of the firm. The manufacturer nicknamed its cars "the Kentucky Thoroughbred," and the San Francisco dealership advertised that its two mid-priced models, a roadster and a touring car, were "Absolutely not an experiment! *Standard* in every detail!" The slogans did not work, and the local firm quickly ceased business, followed soon thereafter by the national company.

1925: Linz Automobile Company, at #1436. Fred J. Linz had previously sold National automobiles (in 1921) and the Columbia and Liberty brands (at 1157 Post Street, in 1924). Here it sold unknown brands, quite possibly Columbia or Liberty.

Auto supplies and accessories

This was the most important auto-related use of this building. Firms of this type were here for eighteen years (1912-1930) and included:

1912-1914: Prest-o-lite Company, at #1430.

1913-1915: Halliwell Company, at #1436. It sold Knight tires, Gabriel Snubber springs, Hauxhurst auxiliary carburetors, and Boyce motometers (a heat gauge that warned of overheating), among other products. In 1914 Halliwell contracted with a California tire maker to make tires under the Halliwell name, an ambitious move that possibly backfired. By June 1915 Halliwell had failed, and its stock was auctioned off. *(Continued next page.)*

History – Occupants (continued)

1916-1923: James E. Inglis, at #1430.

1922-1930: Stewart-Warner Products, at #1450. Stewart-Warner was founded in 1905 by John K. Stewart and became Stewart-Warner in 1912. This Chicago firm became a nationally-prominent maker of instruments (such as speedometers) for automobiles. It is still in business after changes in ownership.

Tire dealers and shops

This was the second most important auto use of this building. Such shops were here for a total of eleven years and included:

1915-1916: Guarantee Vulcanizing and Tire Company, at #1440.

1917-1921: Guarantee Tire and Supply Company, at #1440.

1918-1924: Mohawk Rubber Company, at #1436.

1927: Guarantee Vulcanizing, at #1440.

Auto repair

One such firm, Petry and Brandt, occupied #1450 during 1915-1916.

Used car sales

Such firms were here for at least five years and included:

1917: Don Lee, at #1450. His showroom for new Cadillacs was at 1601 Van Ness.

1927-1928: H. A. Seller, at #1436.

1931: McGinnis and Stanfield, at #1436.

1932: L. M. Schomer, at #1436.

Auto finance

Jules H. Bernheim sold commercial paper from the storefront at #1430 during 1923-1925, then made auto loans from that space during 1926-1940. He apparently had an extensive auto career besides making auto loans. His obituary (June 14, 1989) states that he "started some of the city's first auto body shops, sales agencies, used car lots, and auto finance companies." Beginning in the 1940s he invested in real estate, owning at least a share of the Hobart and Sharon buildings.

Other businesses

Known businesses in this building that were not auto-related are listed below:

(Continued next page.)

History – Occupants (continued)

1918-1964+: Western-Union had a telegraph office at #1448 during these forty-six-plus years. This was one of many Western-Union branch offices in the city.

1933-1940+: Lucky's Lunch occupied #1440 during at least these years.

1940-1953+: Shirar-Young Refrigeration occupied #1450 during at least these years.

1953-1964+: W. P. Fuller and Co. had a paint shop at #1430 during at least these years.

Summary of auto-related uses

Not counting auto loans (considered in this study to be of minor importance), auto-related uses of several types occupied this building for twenty years, from 1912-1932.

Six auto brands were sold here at a very early date, but only for two years. Most were minor brands that are little-remembered today. As an auto showroom, this building was not very successful.

By contrast, this building was somewhat prominent as a home for auto supplies stores and auto tire shops. Such businesses occupied this building for eighteen years, from 1912 to 1930.

Integrity

The storefront windows and entrances in this building's most important façade, facing Van Ness Avenue, have been generally altered, with much infill and new sash. All windows on the Pine Street side have also been altered. Left intact are the cornice and frieze area, the pilasters that bound the pavilions and bays, walls on the Pine and Austin facades, and two original windows in the Austin Street façade. In sum, the building retains integrity of location; integrity of association is largely retained; and integrity of design, materials, workmanship, and feeling are substantially diminished. Integrity of setting is also diminished by modern construction in the vicinity. Overall, integrity of the building could be described as "fair."

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.*

(Continued next page.)

History – Occupants (continued)

Completed in 1912, this is a very early example of a building with automobile-related uses. With 20 years of such use in its history, it has good longevity in this use. The most prominent uses of this building, as auto supplies stores and auto tire shops, are considered in this study to be at a medium level in the hierarchy of auto-related uses (after auto showrooms and public garages). This building's use as an auto showroom, though very early, was also very brief, involving mostly obscure brands, and should be considered minor.

In sum, this building's history of auto-related use does not seem important enough to outweigh its lessened integrity. Accordingly, the building does not appear to be eligible for the California Register of Historical Resources under Criterion 1, for its automobile related use. Although the non-auto-related uses of this building were not carefully studied for this report, a similar argument would probably hold true for them, as well.

None of the proprietors of businesses in this building is known to have been individually important in his field, except for one, Don Lee, who only sold used cars here for one year (his Cadillac dealership was elsewhere). Accordingly, this building does not appear to be eligible for the California Register under Criterion 2.

Architecturally, this building has a very fine cornice and frieze composition. This does not seem enough to outweigh the extensive changes that have been made to the building, and so it does not appear to be eligible for the California Register under Criterion 3, for its design.