P1. Historic name of building (if any): Patrick J. Kelley garage/William B. Gibson auto painting 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 Location: *a: County San Francisco ☐ Not for Publication ■ Unrestricted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 731-799 Van Ness Avenue/811 Eddy Street City San Francisco Zip 94102

d. UTM: Zone _____; _____mE/ _____ mN *e. Assessor's parcel #: Block 743, lot 1

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

This two-story-plus-basement, reinforced concrete building fills its 120-foot by 125-foot lot and faces on three streets: Van Ness Avenue (the east façade), Eddy Street (the north façade), and Larch Street (the south façade). The three facades have an equal level of finish in the Classical Revival in style and are coated with stucco. The building is two stories in height along Eddy Street, but due to the slope of Van Ness Avenue the basement level reaches a full extra story at Larch Street. Both corners of the building – at Van Ness and Eddy, and at Van Ness and Larch – are chamfered for entrances. The pedestrian entrance to the building is in the former corner and one of the building's several vehicle entrances is in the latter corner.

(See Continuation Sheet, page 2.)

***P3b Resource Attributes:** HP6 – 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 NW at Van Ness and Larch St. facades, June 2009

***P6. Date Constructed/Age and Source:** ■ Historic ☐ Prehistoric ☐ Both
1916-1917, 1925; original plans

***P7. Owner and Address:**
OSAMU & MICHI TANAKA
REVOC
442 24TH AVE
SAN FRANCISCO CA 94121

***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):

A paneled parapet and a profiled cornice can be found at the top of the building, and a similar cornice can be found at the second floor level. In the first and second stories the wall surface consists of paired pilasters that rest on a plain beam. Below, in the basement level, the walls take the form of rusticated piers that correspond to the pilasters above. The moldings in the two cornices and in the pilaster capitals wrap around the corners of the building, linking the three facades into a continuous composition.

The spaces between the pilasters are filled by wooden windows, each divided by muntins into twenty-five (in the second story) or thirty (in the first story) lights. Basement windows are similar in treatment.

In the corner at Van Ness and Eddy the pedestrian entrance has a strongly classical treatment, with a profiled pediment, transom bar, and casing; paired doors; and pilasters to the sides; all made of wood. Each door is glazed with five lights arranged in a column. A transom of many lights is above this entrance, and a flight of eight semicircular concrete steps leads up to it. One other pedestrian entrance exists, in the Eddy Street façade; it has a modern metal door and transom.

Early, perhaps original vehicle doors can be found in the chamfered Van Ness and Larch corner and almost adjacent on Larch Street. These are paired wooden doors of differing paneled designs, and are utilitarian in character. Three other vehicle entrances with non-original roll-up metal doors can also be found in this building: two in the Eddy Street façade and one in Larch Street. One of these (in Eddy St.) has a ramp leading to the second story.

View looking southwest at Van Ness Avenue and Eddy Street facades

Top photo: Pedestrian entrance in the chamfered corner at Van Ness and Eddy Street
Bottom photo: Two early or original vehicle entrances at Van Ness and Larch Street

BUILDING, STRUCTURE, AND OBJECT RECORD

***NRHP Status Code** 3CS

***Resource Name or #** (Assigned by recorder) 731-799 Van Ness Avenue/811 Eddy Street

B1. Historic Name: Patrick J. Kelley garage/William B. Gibson auto painting shop

B2. Common Name: _____

B3. Original Use: public garage, auto painting, an auto repair B4. Present Use: vacant

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

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

The first story was built in 1916-1917. The second story was added, matching the design of the first, in 1925.

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

***B8. Related Features:**

none

B9a. Architect: Willis Polk and Co. b. Structural engineer: T. Ronneberg c. Builder: unknown

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

Period of Significance 1916-1954 **Property Type** auto shop and garage **Applicable Criteria** 1, 3

(Discuss importance in terms of historical or architectural context as defined by theme, period, and geographic scope. Also address integrity.)

History

The first story of this building was built in 1916-1917 for the Wallace Estate Co. as an investment, to designs by Willis Polk and Co. The second story was added in 1925, also by Willis Polk and Co., one year after Willis Polk's death. This addition left the first story intact and closely followed its design. The plans for this addition were signed by James H. Mitchell, then the designing partner in the firm and previously a long-time draftsman of Polk's. The structural engineer in 1925, and presumably also in 1916-1917, was T. Ronneberg, who had been Polk's in-house engineer since 1906, when Polk headed the San Francisco branch of D. H. Burnham and Co. This building was one of four or five auto-related buildings designed by Polk in the study area. One of the others, 2000 Van Ness, was altered at an early date with the addition of several new stories, and the others have been demolished, leaving this building as the only one by Polk with high integrity in the study area.

(See Continuation Sheet, page 5.)

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

***B12. References:**

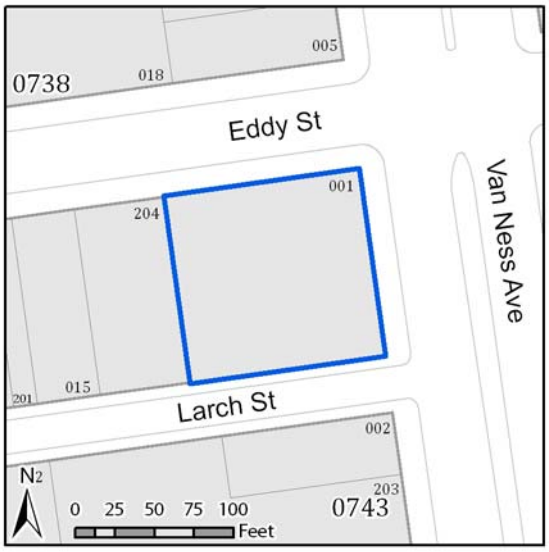
Original plans at Dept. of Bldg. Insp. (via Heritage), 1916 and 1925
Crocker-Langley and Polk's city directory, and PT&T reverse directory listings for occupants of this building, 1918-1964
1928 Sanborn insurance map

B13. Remarks:

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

(This space reserved for official comments.)

(Sketch map with north arrow required)



History (continued)

From 1917 through the early 1940s this was a multi-use building, with two to four auto-related businesses here simultaneously. These included auto repair shops, auto painting shops, and a public garage. During 1944-1954 only one business occupied the building. Addresses varied over time, with the Van Ness and Larch entrance variously known as 731 or 735 Van Ness; and the Van Ness and Eddy entrance variously known as 759 or 799 Van Ness, or 801 Eddy. The list of occupants follows:

1917-1925: American Auto Painting Co.
1917-1921: Van Ness Auto Repair
1919-1942: Patrick J. Kelly (garage)
1919-1925: Edwin L. Stone (auto repair)
1927-1935: William B. Gibson (auto painting through 1932, then auto repair)
1933-1937: Archie Proben (auto repair)
1939-1940: K&M Auto Reconstruction
1940-1941: Pacific Motor Sales
1944-1954: Don Gilmore Chevrolet, service division
1955-1964: vacant, or occupants unknown

The last known occupant, Don Gilmore, owned a Chevrolet dealership nearby at 550 Van Ness Avenue from 1936-1954. His was one of three important Chevrolet dealerships in the study area during those years. Evidently his business outgrew that building, which had been constructed in 1909, and he then acquired 731-799 Van Ness for use as his service division from 1944 onward.

In summary, this building was occupied by auto-related businesses for 36 years (through 1954). The building held two to four businesses simultaneously for its first 24 years. Auto repair shops were here for 26 years, a public garage was here for 24 years, and auto painting shops were here for fourteen years.

History – Context

Multi-use automobile buildings

This is one of four surviving buildings in the study area that generally held three or more auto-related businesses simultaneously, and is the most intact of the three. The others are:

1430-1480 Van Ness Avenue (built 1912; occupied by new and used auto showrooms, tire stores, auto supplies stores, and an auto finance company; window sash altered)

1600-1630 Van Ness Avenue (built 1913; occupied by new and used auto showrooms, an auto body builder, and auto supplies shops; window sash altered)

1575-1595 Bush Street (built 1923; occupied by auto tops and trimming shops, auto painting shops, auto repair shops, wheel aligning and brake shops; high integrity, but demolition has been approved)

Buildings with original vehicle entrance doors

This is one of only three buildings in the study area that still retain their original (or early) vehicle entrance doors; the others are 1946-1960 Van Ness (built in 1920) and 1565 Bush Street (built in 1923).

Integrity

This building is little changed from the time of the second story addition in 1925. It retains nearly all of its wooden windows, its wooden pedestrian doors, and two of its vehicle entrance doors. The building retains integrity of location, design, materials, workmanship, setting, feeling, and association.

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*.

Built in 1916-1917 (with an added story in 1925), this is an early example of a building that was intended to hold multiple automobile-related uses (in the case of this building, auto painting, auto repair, and a public garage). With 24 years of such multiple uses in its history (1917-1941), it has good longevity in such uses. With 36 years of total automobile usage (1917-1954), it has excellent longevity in such use. In addition, this is one of the two best examples of buildings in the study area that generally held multiple automobile uses, and it is expected to become the single best example, for at this writing demolition of the other has been approved. Finally, the integrity of this building is exceptionally high, with nearly all of its wooden windows plus two of its early vehicle entrance doors intact. This is one of only three buildings in the study area that retains such doors. For these several reasons, this building appears to be eligible for the California Register of Historical Resources under Criterion 1, at the local level, for its long and early history of general automobile usage, and its high integrity. The Period of Significance under this criterion is 1917-1954, the years the building had such use.

None of the proprietors in this building's history, except for Don Gilmore, are known to have been particularly important in his field, and Gilmore is better represented by another building, at 550 Van Ness. Accordingly, this building does not appear to be eligible for the California Register under Criterion 2.

Architecturally, this building is a fine example of an automobile-related building by an extremely important architectural firm, Willis Polk and Co. (generally recognized as a master architect). It is also the last intact building by Polk in the study area, out of four or five that he designed. The design of the pedestrian entrance in the chamfered corner at Van Ness and Eddy is particularly fine, and the integrity is remarkably high. For these reasons, this building appears to be eligible for the California Register under Criterion 3. The Period of Significance under this criterion is 1916-1917 and 1925, the years of construction.

Character defining features

The character defining features of this building are its height and width, its stucco surface, its parapet and cornices, the paired pilasters in the two main stories and the rusticated piers in the basement story, all of the windows that have been divided by wooden muntins into many lights, the pedestrian entrance with its paired wooden doors, pediment, transom bar, pilasters, and transom, the semi-circular concrete steps leading up to this entrance, and the two sets of wooden vehicle doors at Van Ness and Larch.

731-799 Van Ness Avenue, shown at right, some time during 1927-1935, when William B. Gibson had his shop here. Photo from San Francisco History Center, Main Library, photo AAB-5689.