

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 _____

Page 1 of 8 *Resource Name or #: (Assigned by recorder) 1270 Bush/1200 Larkin

P1. Historic name of building (if any): Taxicab Co. of California garage--William L. Hughson Ford dealership
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 Location: *a: County San Francisco Not for Publication Unrestricted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 1270 Bush/1200 Larkin City San Francisco Zip 94109
d. UTM: Zone _____; _____ mE/ _____ mN *e. Assessor's parcel #: Block 278, lot 8

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

This building is located at the northeast corner of Bush and Larkin streets and fills its lot, which measures 137'-6" square (i.e., a full 50-vara lot). For most of its length on Bush Street this building is one story plus an attic in height, but due of the slope of Bush Street, it becomes two full stories at its western end (at Larkin Street). An announcement in an architectural journal of this building's planned construction stated that it would be of Class A construction, with a "complete" steel frame, brick exterior walls, and a concrete floor. The exterior walls are tan-colored pressed brick that have been painted on the lower level. These brick walls are backed up by vertical steel beams that support the reinforced concrete main (second story) floor.

(See Continuation Sheet, page 2.)

*P3b Resource Attributes: HP6 – two-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 southwest
June 2009
*P6. Date Constructed/Age and Source: Historic
 Prehistoric Both
1914; published building notice
*P7. Owner and Address:
VRIONIS INVESTMENT
PROPERTI ES
4115 BLACKHAWK PLAZA CIR
DANVILLE CA 94506
*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)

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Description (continued)

The eastern half of this building has a gabled roof, while the western half has a pyramidal roof that is nearly hidden behind a low parapet. On both the Bush and Larkin sides the gable and parapet walls are topped by a course of brick headers and a lower course of stretchers, each projecting very slightly beyond the wall plane. Below the parapet, a profiled cornice wraps around both facades. This cornice is decorated with alternating triglyphs and metopes, with circular medallions filling the metopes. Immediately beneath the cornice is a course of egg-and-dart molding. It is this cornice and molding that gives the building its Classical Revival style.

Windows in the main story are divided by wooden mullions into five parts, each of which is further divided by wooden muntins into many lights. In a few places muntins have disappeared, resulting in larger panes of glass. The window within the eastern wing rises to a full arch, within the gabled area of the building. Here the window composition interrupts the cornice, which is otherwise continuous. Spandrels beneath the main story windows are paneled, with profiled edges. In the lower story, openings are variously devoted to vehicle entry or are filled with replacement steel frame windows. A vehicle entrance can also be found at the eastern end on the Bush Street side.



View looking NE at the Larkin Street side of the building



Top photo: Detail of arched window on Bush Street
Bottom photo: Detail of window on Larkin Street side

BUILDING, STRUCTURE, AND OBJECT RECORD

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*Resource Name or # (Assigned by recorder) 1270 Bush/1200 Larkin

B1. Historic Name: Taxicab Co. of California garage--William L. Hughson Ford dealership

B2. Common Name: _____

B3. Original Use: taxicab garage B4. Present Use: tire sales and auto repair

*B5. Architectural Style: Classical Revival

*B6. Construction History: (Construction date, alterations, and date of alterations)
Built in 1914.

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

*B8. Related Features:
none

B9a. Architect: Sylvain Schnaittacher b. Builder: unknown

*B10. Significance: Theme taxicab and automobile industries Area San Francisco

Periods of Significance 1914-1928, 1944-1964 Property Type garage Applicable Criteria 1, 2, 3

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

History

Taxicab companies in this building, 1914-1928

The original owner and occupant of this building was the Taxicab Company of California. This business was one of the first four automobile taxicab companies in San Francisco, each of them having been founded in 1908 or 1909. By 1914, when this building was built, the Taxicab Company of California was one of seven such businesses in the city. According to a building notice published just before construction began, the one story section of this building (the eastern portion with a gabled roof) was to be occupied as a garage for cars, while the two story section (the western portion) was to be a machine and repair shop. This is the earliest building known to have been built as a taxicab garage in San Francisco, and is also by far the oldest known taxicab garage in the city.

(Continued on page 5.)

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

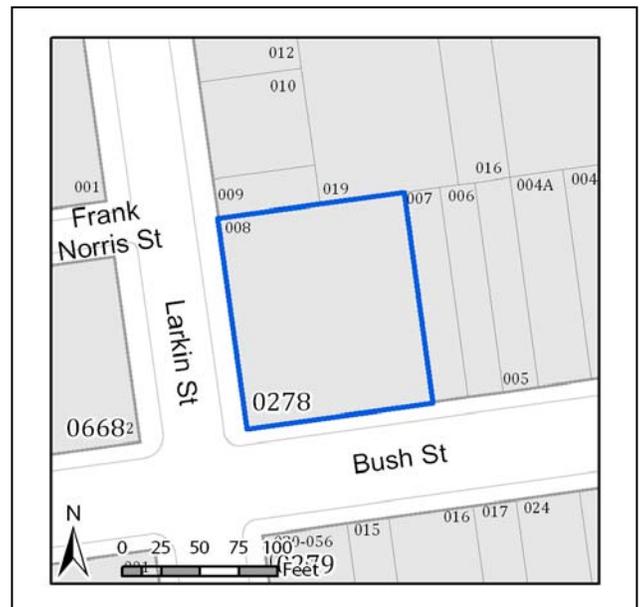
***B12. References:**

- Building and Industrial News, April 22, 1914, 13: 2-3
- San Francisco Chronicle, May 30, 1914, p. 11
- Crocker-Langley and Polk's city directory, PT&T reverse directory, and PT&T yellow pages, 1915-1964
- 1929 Sanborn insurance map

B13. Remarks:

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

(This space reserved for official comments.)



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History (continued)

The Taxicab Company of California occupied this building until 1922. From that year to 1928 it was occupied by Yellow Cab Co. plus other cab companies (e.g. Black and White, Yellow Checker, and Graystone). In sum, taxicab companies occupied this building for fourteen years. Note: After 1928 the Yellow-Checker Cab Company Consolidated moved to 245 Turk Street, its longtime home (now demolished).

1929-1933

Occupants of this building over the next sixteen years are only partially known. During 1930-1934 an auto parts and accessories business known as the Safety House occupied the western portion of this building (1200 Larkin). Merchants' Parcel Delivery Service occupied the eastern portion (1270 Bush) in 1938, and the Universal Garage Annex occupied the building during 1938-1940.

William L. Hughson's Ford dealership, 1943-1980

This building became the Ford dealership of William L. Hughson in 1943. Hughson was one of the earliest auto dealers in San Francisco, beginning in 1903, and he continued to sell autos in this city until his death in 1967. During his early years as an auto dealer he sold several brands of automobiles, including Ford; but beginning in 1921, and including the years he occupied 1270 Bush/1200 Larkin, he concentrated in selling Ford and related brands. In his later years he was touted as being the world's first Ford dealer, and for this reason there is a collection of William L. Hughson's papers in the Ford Motor Company archives.

Because of Hughson's importance as a San Francisco automobile dealer, this account will outline his history and state which of his auto dealership buildings in San Francisco still stand.

From 1899 into the 1950s he was partner in Hughson and Merton, manufacturers' agents, which initially represented makers of buggies and bicycles, but soon became connected to the automobile industry. It later sold automobile parts to the public, including (in 1909-1915) Ajax tires and Jones speedometers. More research remains to be done on the kinds of products that Hughson and Merton sold or represented.

Early in 1903 William L. Hughson and partners founded the Holle Automobile Manufacturers Company, with Hughson as president. Their auto showroom was located at 1814 Market Street, near Van Ness Avenue, and sold Ford, Duryea, and Acme cars. 1903 was also the year that Ford Motor Company was founded. According to stories told by Hughson later in life, he traveled to Detroit that year to purchase bicycles, met Henry Ford, and with his partners invested \$5,000 in the purchase of some of the first Ford autos.

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History (continued)

The Holle showroom on Market Street was destroyed in the 1906 earthquake and fire. Hughson and his partners re-incorporated then as the Standard Motor Car Company and opened a modest showroom in a wooden building at 503 Golden Gate Avenue. That building, too, was destroyed by a fire in 1908. Their next location, for one year, was at 343-347 Golden Gate Avenue (no longer standing). From 1909-1913 Hughson's Standard Motor Company was located in a substantial new brick building at the southeast corner of Golden Gate and Van Ness avenues (extant; now numbered 550 Van Ness). Here, they sold Stoddard-Dayton, Ford, Velie, and Baker Electric autos and Federal trucks. Standard also had an auto showroom in Oakland during these years.

In 1913 Hughson and his partners re-incorporated again, this time for the purpose of attracting a Kissel Kar franchise. They formed the Pacific Kissel Kar Branch and moved their showroom into a block-long building at the northwest corner of Van Ness Avenue and Geary Street (no longer standing). The officers were William L. Hughson as president, two of his former vice-presidents at Standard Motor Car Co., and a vice-president of the Kissel Kar company. For the next five years Kissel Kar was the major brand that they featured, but they also sold Ford and Federal trucks. They also had a Los Angeles location where they sold Baker Electrics in addition to the above brands.

In 1918 Hughson and his partners reorganized yet again, as the William L. Hughson Company, apparently to emphasize their line of Ford autos over Kissel Kar line, which they dropped in early 1919. Two years later, in 1921, Hughson moved into his largest building yet, at the southeast corner of Eleventh and Market streets (no longer standing). Hughson remained here through 1943, selling Ford autos and trucks, Fordson tractors, Lincoln and Mercury autos, and Federal trucks.

In 1943-1945 Hughson moved for the last time, to two buildings at 1270 Bush/1200 Larkin and 1400 Van Ness (also extant). He remained in both buildings until his death in 1967, at age 97. During most of these years he used 1400 Van Ness as his auto showroom while using 1270 Bush/1200 Larkin as his head office and service center. During some years he also sold new automobiles from 1270 Bush/1200 Larkin (e.g. in 1943-1946, 1953, 1964). The latter building (i.e., the one being evaluated on this form) was always his head office, according to city directory listings.

He also occupied other buildings during the 1940s-1960s in addition to the above two. During 1945-1950 he occupied 1361 Bush (extant but altered) as an auto painting shop. From 1951 to at least 1959 he occupied 2020-2034 Van Ness Avenue both as a used car salesroom and an auto painting shop (extant). During approximately 1957-1964 he also occupied 1415 Van Ness and 1350 Van Ness as used auto sales rooms (both extant). In 1961, he occupied 1267 Bush for use as an auto repair shop (extant).

After Hughson's death in 1967 his Ford dealership continued to be located in this building (1270 Bush/1200 Larkin) through at least 1980. The building was used as a showroom and, later, as a parts and service center.

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The architect, Sylvain Schnaittacher

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.

His 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 automobile showroom at 1699 Van Ness Avenue (1919, 1923; in the study area of this report), the Argonaut Club at the northwest corner of Post and Powell (1909; now Borders Books), 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). Several of his better buildings have been demolished, including two in the study area of this report, Heald's College, at 1201 Van Ness (1913), and the adjacent garage at 1240 Post Street (1919).

Integrity

New framing and sash for openings in the lower story is the only alteration of note; the brick walls in that story have also been painted. The rest of the lower story and virtually all of the upper story remain intact. In sum, this 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*.

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Evaluation (continued)

Under Criterion 1, this building has significance in two ways. The first, its early use as a taxicab garage, has little relationship with the theme of automobile support structures. It is significant instead because this taxicab garage was built only several years after the automobile taxicab industry was founded in San Francisco; and this was a large taxicab garage, probably one of the largest such in the city when it was built. Additionally, this is the only large building known to survive that had a sustained use as a taxicab garage before World War II. (A few buildings in the study area of this report had very brief uses as taxicab garages.) Accordingly, this building appears to be eligible for the California Register under Criterion 1 at the local level; the Period of Significance for its use under this criterion is 1914-1928.

Under Criterion 2, association with persons, this building is significant for its use as an auto sales building by William L. Hughson. Hughson's use of this building is late (beginning in 1943), and for most years during the 1940s-1960s he divided his operations between this building (head office and service shop) and 1400 Van Ness Avenue (his principle showroom). However, Hughson was so important as a Ford dealer in San Francisco, especially from 1921 onward, that both of these buildings (this one and 1400 Van Ness) possess historical significance because of his use of these buildings. This is especially true because his previous buildings at Geary and Van Ness and at 11th and Market no longer stand. Accordingly, this building appears to be eligible for the California Register under Criterion 2 at the local level; the Period of Significance under this criterion is 1944-1964.

Under Criterion 3, design, this building has significance as an outstanding example of automobile garage design. The segregated uses of this building during its early years (garage in the eastern, or uphill portion; and service area in the western, lower portion) is reflected in the different roofs these two sections have (gabled and pyramidal); yet the two parts of the building are unified through a common cornice and similar fenestrations. The quality of the brickwork and other detailing is high. The architect of this building is important in San Francisco's architectural history, and this is one of his better surviving buildings. Accordingly, this building appears to be eligible for the California Register under Criterion 3 at the local level; the Period of Significance under this criterion is 1914, the year the building was built.

Character defining features

The character defining features of this building include its brick walls and brick patterning, the roofline of the building, the cornice, the courses of egg-and-dart molding, original window sash, the spandrel in the eastern wing facing Bush Street, and the structural steel frame. The painting on the bricks and non-original window frames are non-contributing features.