

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 7 *Resource Name or #: (Assigned by recorder) 1650-1660 Pacific Avenue

P1. Historic name of building (if any): Kay's Garage
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 Location: *a: County San Francisco Not for Publication Unrestricted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 1650-1660 Pacific Avenue City San Francisco Zip 94109
d. UTM: Zone _____; _____ mE/ _____ mN *e. Assessor's parcel #: Block 574, lot 12

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

This two-story, reinforced concrete, building fills its lot, which measures 69'-3" in width along Pacific Avenue by 127'-8" (minus a notch in the rear) in depth. The surface of the building is covered with stucco that has been scored to resemble masonry. In composition, the façade is divided by piers into three bays of equal width. The corners of these piers are chamfered, and these chamfered edges rise to become part of the Tudor window moldings in the second story. In the first story, replacement metal window sash and entrance frames, and a roll-up vehicle door, fill the original openings. The bulkhead in the storefront area appears to be original.

(See Continuation Sheet, page 2.)

*P3b Resource Attributes: HP8 – industrial building



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

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

*P6. Date Constructed/Age and Source:
 Historic
 Prehistoric Both
1921; building permit

*P7. Owner and Address:
CREDIT SHELTER TRUST-TR C
50 CALIFORNIA ST #1900
SAN FRANCISCO CA 94111

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

*P9. Date Recorded: December 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)

In the second story, windows have gently pointed Tudor arches and are covered by drip moldings that terminate in foliated knobs. As mentioned above, the inside edge of these moldings descend to become the chamfered edges of the building's main piers. Each of these windows is divided by thick mullions into three parts. These mullions are original, while the window sash within the openings is of replacement metal. Spandrels filling the area above the arches are paneled in light relief.

A castellated parapet stretches across the top of the building and is decorated with short, incised lines at the center of each bay. A cornice the width of the building can be found at the base of the parapet. It is plain except for shields placed at the division of the bays. From each shield, foliated ornament rises into the parapet area and drops into the area between the windows.



Detail of the top of the building

BUILDING, STRUCTURE, AND OBJECT RECORD

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*Resource Name or # (Assigned by recorder) 1650-1660 Pacific Avenue

B1. Historic Name: Kay's Garage

B2. Common Name: _____

B3. Original Use: public garage B4. Present Use: offices

*B5. Architectural Style: Classical Revival

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

Built in 1921. Window and entrance openings altered at an unknown date.

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

*B8. Related Features:
none

B9a. Architect: O'Brien Brothers b. Builder: Fred L. Hansen

*B10. Significance: Theme automobile industry Area San Francisco

Period of Significance 1921-1964 Property Type public 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 -- Introduction

This building was built in 1921 as an investment for Louis R. Lurie, a prominent real estate developer of the time, to designs by the O'Brien Brothers, architects. Over the next 43 years this building had a history of use as a public garage, an auto repair shop, and a wholesale auto parts and accessories store.

The O'Brien Brothers, architects

O'Brien Brothers consisted of Walter J., Albert L. and Arthur T. O'Brien, and practiced in San Francisco from 1907 through 1935. In 1925, after the deaths of his brothers, Walter J. O'Brien began working with Wilbur D. Peugh; the firm ultimately became known as "O'Brien Brothers and Wilbur D. Peugh."

(See Continuation Sheet, page 3.)

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

***B12. References:**

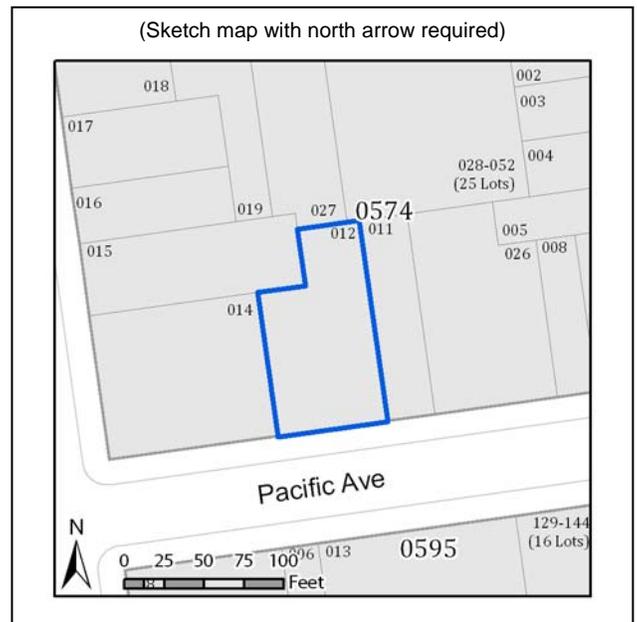
- Building permit #100896 (September 15, 1921)
- Crocker-Langley and Polk's city directory, PT&T reverse directory, and PT&T yellow pages listings for occupants of this building, 1922-1964
- 1929 Sanborn insurance map ("Waldorf Garage", capacity 75 cars)

B13. Remarks:

*B14. Evaluator: William Kostura

Date of Evaluation: December 2009

(This space reserved for official comments.)



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The O'Brien Brothers, architects

O'Brien Brothers had a diversified practice concentrating on industrial and commercial buildings, but also including many apartment buildings and residences. Auto related buildings were only a small percentage of their output, but it might be accurate to say that they made a specialty of designing this building type. O'Brien Brothers, in fact, probably designed more buildings for the automobile industry than did any other San Francisco architectural firm. Outside of the study area, their outstanding building of this type is the Palace Garage, at 111-127 Stevenson Street (1921). Other fine garage buildings by them include 1419 Pacific Avenue (1913-1914), 525 Jones Street (1922), and 640 O'Farrell Street (1924). Their Pickwick Hotel at 5th and Mission (1925) included a bus depot.

Within the study area, O'Brien Brothers designed two auto showrooms, at 1601 Van Ness (1912-1913; demolished) and 1600-1630 Van Ness (1913; partially altered), plus several public garages. The latter group include the Jackson Garage at 1641 Jackson (1914), Kay's Garage at 1660 Pacific (1921), the Grand Central Garage at 66 Page (1924), and the Kern Garage at 1700 Pine (1925).

These buildings were designed in prevailing styles such as Classical Revival and Tudor Revival that were adapted to automotive needs. Wide expanses of industrial steel sash windows allowed generous amounts of light for automotive work and gave these buildings a functional or industrial feeling that was enlivened by the historical ornament.

Three of these garages are Tudor Revival in style and have three-bay compositions, and thus are markedly similar to each other, though they are not copies. These include 640 O'Farrell, 66 Page, and 1650-1660 Pacific. The former has the best integrity, retaining its original widow sash; the second of these has new window sash that matches the original, and the last – the building being evaluated here – has non-original sash that does not match the original.

Several of O'Brien Brothers' auto-related buildings have been demolished or heavily altered. These include 401-425 Fourth Street (1912), 1360 Eddy Street (1921), 626-628 Golden Gate Avenue (1925-1926), and 140 Hayes Street (1928). Other works of theirs may exist that have not come to light.

This section dwells at some length on the architects because the O'Brien Brothers was a very important architectural firm, and their specialty in designing garages and other automobile-related buildings is particularly relevant to this report. To recapitulate, approximately ten of O'Brien Brothers' buildings for the automobile industry are known to still stand. Eight have high integrity, one (the subject building) has lost its original window sash and doors but is otherwise fairly intact, and one has been altered more severely.

History – Occupants

This building was used either as a public garage or an auto repair shop, and usually as both, for its first 23 years. As a garage, it had a capacity of 75 automobiles, according to the 1929 Sanborn map. Subsequently, this building was occupied by a wholesale auto parts and accessories store. The list of occupants is as follows:

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History – Occupants (continued)

1922-1924: Waldorf Garage. In addition to parking, it offered washing, polishing, and towing services “day and night,” and sold accessories. The proprietors at this time are unknown.

1924: Barsotti (Julius G.) and Stiavetti (Hugo), auto repair shop. They shared this building with the Waldorf Garage.

1925-1929: West (Mark) and Kay (Chester H.). They usually listed their business a garage, but for one year (1925) listed it as an auto repair shop. They may have offered both services this entire period.

1930-1942: Kay’s Garage and Kay’s Auto Repair, proprietor Chester H. Kay. As the two names imply, Kay’s business had a dual role as a garage and auto repair shop during these years (as revealed in his yellow pages listings). It is likely that he offered parking and light servicing on one level of the building and heavier repairs on the other floor, though this division of space is not known for certain.

1941-1944: Robert A. Farris, auto repair shop. He shared this building with Kay for the first two years. After 1944 he changed the name and nature of his business to:

1945-1954: Automotive Sales Company, Robert A. Farris, proprietor. This was a wholesale auto parts and accessories store. His ads in the yellow pages state that he sold shock absorbers, clutches, front end parts, gas and oil lines, brass fittings, fuel pumps, coil springs, thermostats, etc. In 1946, at least, he not only distributed such parts, he refurbished some of them as well, advertising “clutch service,” “pressure plates rebuilt,” “disc relined,” and “fly wheel regrinding.” Perhaps because he repaired such parts he ran a second listing in the yellow pages under auto repair during all these years.

1955-1960: vacant

1961-1964: Tom Dunne Auto Body Repairs.

In sum, this was a garage for 20 years, and for most of that time auto repair services were offered as well. This building also served as an auto repair shop only for additional seven years. Finally, it was a wholesale auto parts store, with some repair service performed as well, for another ten years. The total auto-related use (garage, auto repair, and parts sales) of this building through 1964 was 37 years.

History – Context

Within the study area of this report, twenty-two buildings have had at least ten years of use as a public garage. Like 1650-1660 Pacific, most of these buildings were also occupied by auto repair shops for several years or more. For purposes of comparison with 1650-1660 Pacific:

Twelve of these buildings had over 20 years of use as a garage, and at least 30 years of combined garage and auto repair use.

1650-1660 Pacific had 20 years of use as a garage, and 27 years of combined garage and auto repair use.

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History – Context (continued)

Two buildings had over ten and less than 20 years of use as a garage, and over 20 years of combined garage and auto repair use.

Four buildings had from 13 to 18 years of total garage and auto repair shop use.

Three buildings have been extensively altered and thus have lost integrity.

In addition to the garages that remains standing, well over a dozen garages (no definite count has been made) in the study area have been demolished.

Integrity

The window sash and frames and the entrances to this building have all been altered within the original openings. The façade of this building is otherwise intact, and the building clearly evokes its early use as a public garage. Overall, it retains integrity of location, design, setting, and association, while integrity of materials, workmanship, and feeling have been 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 1921, this is a moderately early example of a public garage and auto repair shop. With 20 years of garage use in its history, it has good longevity in this use. With 27 years of use as either a public garage or an auto repair shop, it has good longevity in these combined uses. With 37 years of all auto-related uses combined (garage, auto repair, and auto parts sales), it has excellent longevity in these uses. The overall integrity of the building is good, for the building still clearly evokes its early uses.

When compared to other surviving garages in this study area, it can be seen that slightly over half of the others have a longer history of garage (or garage and auto repair) use, and equal or better integrity. 1650-1660 Pacific can thus be said to be in the second tier of the study area's surviving public garages, albeit at the top of that second tier. It is also worth noting that many of the study area's garages have been demolished; and when many examples of a building type have vanished, the survivors become more valuable.

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Evaluation (continued)

On balance, this building appears to be eligible for the California Register of Historical Resources under Criterion 1, at the local level, for its use as a public garage and auto repair shop. The Period of Significance under for these uses is 1922-1944. In a broader sense, it is also significant for its overall auto-related use (including auto parts sales), with a Period of Significance of 1922-1964.

None of the proprietors in this building's history emerge as very important in his field. Chester H. Kay and Robert A. Farris are the most interesting, but at present not enough is known about either of them to support a finding of significance for this building based on their occupancy of it. 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 the O'Brien Brothers, a very important architectural firm in San Francisco's history. It is also one of three Tudor Revival garages by them. About seven other auto-related buildings by the O'Brien Brothers, including the other two Tudor Revival garages, are better examples of this building type than 1650-1660 Pacific is, due either to their superior design or their higher integrity. Seven is not a large number, however, and thus, because of the importance of the O'Brien Brothers, this building does appear to be eligible for the California Register under Criterion 3. The Period of Significance under this criterion is 1921, the year of construction.

Character defining features

The character defining features of this building are its height and width; the scored stucco surface; the Tudor Revival windows with their molded perimeters; the four piers with their chamfered edges; the cornice with its decorative shields, and the plaster ornament that ascends or depends from these shields; and the castellated parapet with its incised lines. The modern metal window sash and door frames are not contributing features to this building.