

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 6 \*Resource Name or #: (Assigned by recorder) 1745 Clay Street

P1. Historic name of building (if any): Clay Street 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 Location: \*a: County San Francisco  Not for Publication  Unrestricted  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 1745 Clay Street City San Francisco Zip 94109  
 d. UTM: Zone \_\_\_\_\_; \_\_\_\_\_ mE/ \_\_\_\_\_ mN \*e. Assessor's parcel #: Block 622, lot 16

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

This two-story brick masonry garage fills its lot, which measures 68'-5" in width by 127'-8" in depth. The façade is expressed in brick that has been painted. Aside from a cornice and three small sculptures, visual interest is created by brickwork that forms borders, panels, and quoins. Recesses and projections of these brick features result in layers of relief and texturing across the façade, which is otherwise rather flat.

A simple cornice and course of dentils stretch across the top of the building, just beneath the parapet. A very small stepped cap rises from the middle of the parapet, and within this is an eagle sculpture set within a panel. The top edge of the parapet is lined with two courses of brick, one of headers and one of stretchers, one projecting slightly over the other.

(See Continuation Sheet, page 2.)

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

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



P5b. Description of Photo:  
 (View, date, accession #)  
 View looking south  
 June 2009  
 \*P6. Date Constructed/Age and Source:  Historic  
 Prehistoric  Both  
 1914; building permit  
 \*P7. Owner and Address:  
AUBERT 1989 RESIDUA TRUST  
2767 OCTAVIA ST  
SAN FRANCISCO CA 94123  
 \*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)

Page 2 of 6  
Recorded by William Kostura

Resource Identifier: 1745 Clay Street  
\*Date December 2009     Continuation     Update

**Description (continued):**

In composition, the façade is symmetrical and divided into five bays. The three middle bays form a wide pavilion that is flanked to either side by narrow end bays. These end bays are bordered by quoins of brick that separate them from the central pavilion. A shield with swags can be found at the top of each end bay. Within the pavilion, two courses of bricks – a course of projecting headers over a course of stretchers – wrap around each of the three bays, defining them. At the base of the building a low bulkhead is also made of bricks, with headers, horizontal stretchers, and vertical stretchers forming this bulkhead.

All original windows and doors have been replaced. In the upper story, windows are now covered with awnings. In the first story, they have been replaced by louvered shutters.



Undated photo of 1745 Clay Street. Assessor's negatives, San Francisco History Center, Main Library.

**BUILDING, STRUCTURE, AND OBJECT RECORD**

Page 3 of 6

\*NRHP Status Code 3CS

\*Resource Name or # (Assigned by recorder) 1745 Clay Street

B1. Historic Name: Clay Street Garage

B2. Common Name: \_\_\_\_\_

B3. Original Use: public garage B4. Present Use: auto repair shop

\*B5. Architectural Style: Classical Revival

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

Built in 1914. Original window sash removed at an unknown date.

\*B7. Moved?  No  Yes  Unknown

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Original Location: \_\_\_\_\_

\*B8. Related Features:

none

B9a. Architect: James R. Miller

b. Builder: B. A. Trobeck and Co.

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

Period of Significance 1914, 1917-1953 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: Construction and architect**

This building was built in 1914 and the original owner of this building was variously given as the Mission Consolidated Realty Co. (in *Edward's Abstracts*) and the San Christina Investment Co. (on the building permit). The intended purpose of the new building was given on the building permit as a public garage.

The architect, James R. Miller, trained under Peter R. Schmidt, A. Page Brown, and Frank S. Van Trees before opening his own office in 1902. He partnered with George T. de Colmesnil intermittently during 1906-1913 and then worked solo until forming a partnership with his long-time draftsman (since before 1912), Timothy Pflueger, in ca. 1922. On his own and with de Colmesnil, Miller had a substantial practice, designing many commercial buildings, apartment buildings, and residences. Among his works were major additions to the Metropolitan Life Insurance building at 600 Stockton, including the pedimented central pavilion; and the rehabilitation of the City of Paris building after the earthquake and fire. Besides 1754 Clay Street, Miller designed two other surviving automobile-related buildings: at 68 Twelfth Street (1912; in the study area of this report) and at 2401 Bush (1915-1916). The later partnership of Miller and Pflueger resulted in some of the most celebrated skyscrapers, theaters, and other buildings in the Bay Area, including the PT&T and 450 Sutter skyscrapers, the Paramount Theater in Oakland, the Castro and Alhambra theaters in San Francisco, Roosevelt Middle School, and the Stock Exchange at 301 Pine/155 Sansome, among many others.

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

**\*B12. References:**

Building permit #54431 (July 10, 1914)

*Edward's Abstracts*, July 11, 1914 (Builder's Contracts)

Crocker-Langley and Polk's city directory, and PT&T reverse directory listings for occupants of this building, 1915-1964  
1918 and 1929 Sanborn insurance maps ("Clay Street Garage", 1731-1745 Clay)

1948 Sanborn insurance map ("garage", 1731-1745 Clay)

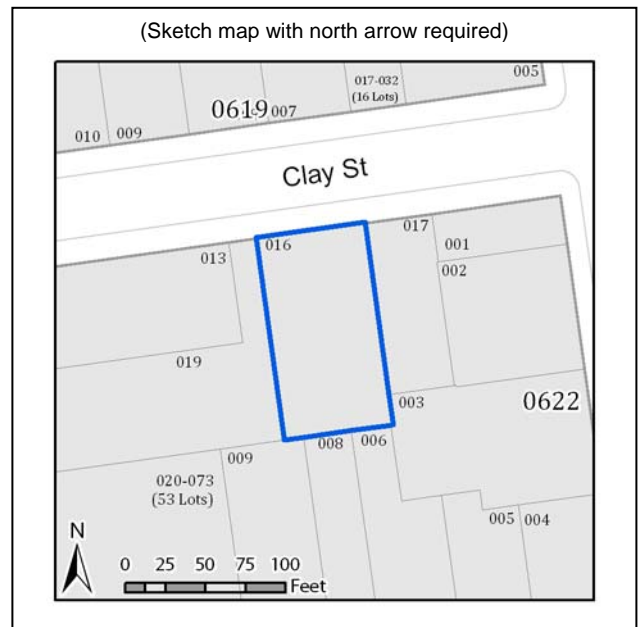
S. F. Chronicle, March 29, 1914, pp. 55 (article) and 57 (adv).

B13. Remarks:

\*B14. Evaluator: William Kostura

Date of Evaluation: December 2009

(This space reserved for official comments.)



Page 4 of 6  
Recorded by William Kostura

Resource Identifier: 1745 Clay Street  
\*Date December 2009     Continuation     Update

## History -- Occupants

### Renault Agency for the Pacific Coast (1914-1918)

Although the building permit for this building stated that it was to be a public garage, the first occupant was instead an auto sales company. During 1914-1918 the Renault Agency for the Pacific Coast sold Renault automobiles, trucks, and aviation engines from this building, then numbered 1731-1745 Clay.

This was the third, and (until perhaps recent decades) the last Renault showroom in San Francisco. Previously, the Renault Freres Selling Branch had been located at 316 Van Ness Avenue (1908-1909) and at 116 Van Ness (1910-1914). A newspaper article and ad from March 1914 (shortly before construction of this building had commenced) shed light on the products sold by this French company. At that time they sold eleven models of automobiles, including four and six-cylinder cars, "torpedo" cars, and a limousine. Both of these Van Ness Avenue buildings where Renault was previously sold have been demolished.

### Clay Street Garage (1917-1959)

Beginning in 1916 or 1917 Renault shared this building with the Clay Street Garage, and after Renault left the Clay Street Garage occupied the entire building. The 1929 Sanborn map indicates that this garage had a capacity of 32 automobiles, so this was not a large garage compared to some others. Details of the business are not known; presumably, in addition to making the building available for long-term and short-term parking, the garage proprietors performed light repairs and servicing of autos and dispensed gasoline, as was common at other garages.

During the 43 years the Clay Street Garage occupied this building it had a number of proprietors and managers. For ten of these years (per city directory listings) the emphasis here was on auto repairs rather than parking. The list of proprietors follows (with indications of auto repair emphasis as known):

1917-1925: unknown proprietors

1926: George Bernard

1927-1934: George Bos

1935: This is the one year during this period that the business here was not called the Clay Street Garage. Instead it was an auto repair shop named Franklin Motor Car Specialists.

1936-1946: Al R. Johnson. For three of these years, 1941-1943, Johnson advertised that he performed auto repair here.

1947-1956: Walter T. Stubo and Walter C. Jensen. During their last three years here, these men advertised that they performed auto repair here.

*(Continued next page.)*

**CONTINUATION SHEET**

Page 5 of 6  
Recorded by William Kostura

Resource Identifier: 1745 Clay Street  
\*Date December 2009     Continuation     Update

**History – Occupants (continued)**

1957-1959: James E. Grainger and Jack R. Lively. While calling their business the Clay Street Garage, Grainger and Lively also performed auto repair here.

The name of this business changed in 1960, when this building was occupied by European Motors, Ltd. It used the building through at least 1964 as auto storage in support of their showroom at 1740 Van Ness Avenue.

In sum, during the period 1914-1964, this building was used as a garage for 33 years, auto repair for ten years, an auto showroom for four years, and storage for an auto showroom for five years.

**Integrity**

Windows and doors have been altered, but otherwise the façade of this building is unchanged. It retains integrity of location, design, feeling, and association. Because the fine brickwork is such an important part of this building, the loss of the original windows has a less prominent effect than it does on other buildings, and thus integrity of materials and workmanship are only slightly diminished. The setting has been diminished by some new construction in the vicinity.

**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 1914, this is an early example of an automobile showroom. With four years of such use in its history, it has brief longevity in this use. The building became a public garage in 1916 or 1917 and was used as such for 33 years. It is thus an early example of a garage, with excellent longevity in this use. Because it is an early and long-lasting example of this important building type, with fairly high integrity, the 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. The Period of Significance under this criterion is 1917-1953, the years the building had this use.

Al R. Johnson (1936-1946), and Stubo and Jensen (1947-1956) were the longest-term proprietors here. Aside from these dates, there is little to indicate that they were individually important in their fields, and accordingly, this building does not appear to be eligible for the California Register under Criterion 2.

(Continued next page.)

Page 6 of 6  
Recorded by William Kostura

Resource Identifier: 1745 Clay Street  
\*Date December 2009     Continuation     Update

### Evaluation (continued)

Architecturally, this building makes excellent use of patterned brickwork, to subtle but effective results. The composition and proportions are also good, and the minimal use of sculptural ornament is effective. Thus, despite the loss of original windows, this building appears to be eligible for the California Register under Criterion 3, as a fine design by an important San Francisco architect. The Period of Significance under this criterion is 1914, the year of construction.

### Character defining features

The character defining features of this building are its height and width, the parapet with its central stepped cap, the brick surface with all of its patterning, the cornice and course of dentils, the size and shape of the window and entrance openings, and the three sculptural ornaments (eagle, and shields with swags). The current window awnings and shutters that fill the openings are not contributing features.