



Thursday, November 16, 2006

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**Zoning and Neighborhood Plan Amendments
(Public Hearings and Possible Action)
RECOMMENDATION FOR COUNCIL ACTION**

ITEM No. 65

Subject: C14H-06-0025 – Victory Grill - Conduct a public hearing and approve an ordinance amending Chapter 25-2 of the Austin City Code by rezoning property locally known as 1104 E 11th Street (Waller Creek Watershed) from general office-conditional overlay-neighborhood conservation- neighborhood plan (GO-CO-NCCD-NP) combining district zoning to general office-historic-conditional overlay- neighborhood conservation-neighborhood plan GO-H-CO-NCCD-NP) combining district zoning. Staff recommendation: To grant general office-historic-conditional overlay-neighborhood conservation-neighborhood plan GO-H-CO-NCCD-NP) combining district zoning. Historic Landmark Commission recommendation: To grant general office-historic-conditional overlay-neighborhood conservation- neighborhood plan (GO-H-CO-NCCD-NP) combining district zoning. Planning Commission , recommendation: To grant general office-historic-conditional overlay-neighborhood conservation-neighborhood plan (GO-H-CO-NCCD-NP) combining district zoning. Applicant: City of Austin. Agent Neighborhood Planning and Zoning Department. City Staff: Steve Sadowsky, 974-6454.

Additional Backup Material

(click to open)

Staff Report

For More Information:

ZONING CHANGE REVIEW SHEET

CASE NUMBER: C14H-06-0025

HLC DATE:

August 28, 2006

PC DATE:

September 26, 2006

APPLICANT: City of Austin

HISTORIC NAME: Victory Grill

WATERSHED: Waller Creek

ADDRESS OF PROPOSED ZONING CHANGE: 1104 E. 11th Street

ZONING FROM: GO-CO-NCCD-NP TO: GO-CO-H-NCCD-NP

SUMMARY STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Staff recommends the proposed zoning change from general office, conditional overlay, neighborhood conservation, neighborhood plan combining district (GO-CO-NCCD-NP) to general office, conditional overlay, neighborhood conservation, neighborhood plan – Historic (GO-CO-H-NCCD-NP) combining district zoning.

HISTORIC LANDMARK COMMISSION ACTION: Recommended the proposed zoning change from general office, conditional overlay, neighborhood conservation, neighborhood plan combining district (GO-CO-NCCD-NP) to general office, conditional overlay, neighborhood conservation, neighborhood plan – Historic (GO-CO-H-NCCD-NP) combining district zoning. Vote: 7-0 (Arriaga and Leary absent).

PLANNING COMMISSION ACTION: Recommended the proposed zoning change from general office, conditional overlay, neighborhood conservation, neighborhood plan combining district (GO-CO-NCCD-NP) to general office, conditional overlay, neighborhood conservation, neighborhood plan – Historic (GO-CO-H-NCCD-NP) combining district zoning. Vote: 7-0 (Reddy and Stegeman absent).

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The Victory Grill is not listed in the Comprehensive Cultural Resources Survey (1984). It was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1998.

CITY COUNCIL DATE: November 16, 2006

ACTION:

ORDINANCE READINGS: 1ST 2ND 3RD

ORDINANCE NUMBER:

CASE MANAGER: Steve Sadowsky

PHONE: 974-6454

NEIGHBORHOOD ORGANIZATION: Robertson Hill Neighborhood Association, Organization of Central East Austin Neighborhoods.

BASIS FOR RECOMMENDATION:

The Victory Grill is listed in the National Register of Historic Places and is significant for its associations with African-American music in Austin.

Architecture:

The Victory Grill is a one-story rectangular-plan mansard-roofed brick and concrete block commercial building.

Historical Associations:

In 1945, **Johnny Holmes** (1917-19) opened up a small hamburger stand in an old one-room ice house he named the Victory Grill commemorating the end of World War II. Business boomed, and in 1947, Holmes constructed the current building as his restaurant, which also housed a dry cleaner. He added a patio in 1948, and enclosed it in 1951 as a nightclub for African-Americans in Austin as well as those stationed on nearby bases. In the late 1940s, Austin was still completely segregated; the city's African-American population as well as African-American musicians had to play at "race" establishments because they were not allowed in white clubs. The Victory Grill thrived as an African-American nightspot, booking local and national acts to play, and became a significant stop on the "chit'lin circuit," the circuit of African-American nightclubs throughout the South and Midwest, including places like Walker's Auditorium in Waco and Duke's Ballroom in Port Arthur.

The Victory Grill closed in 1973, a victim of changing tastes in music, and the decline of Austin's east side. Where numerous clubs, juke joints, restaurants, and other establishments catering to the city's African-American population had lined E. 11th and other streets on the east side, only a handful remained. Holmes went on to be a full-time music promoter in West Texas, and re-opened the Victory Grill for a Juneteenth celebration in 1989. In 1991, Eva Lindsey became the new proprietress of the Victory Grill, and has opened it for special occasions, including South by Southwest showcases and East Austin galas.

PARCEL NO.: 0208061810000

DEED RECORD: Unknown

LEGAL DESCRIPTION: The South 104.5 feet of the West 10.67 feet of Lot 61 and the South 104.5 feet of the East 33.47 feet of Lot 62, Outlot 55, Division B

ANNUAL TAX ABATEMENT:

\$3,429 (income-producing); city portion: \$364

APPRAISED VALUE: \$187,613

PRESENT USE: Social hall

CONDITION: Good

PRESENT OWNER

Johnny M. Holmes, Jr., Myrtle Faye Holmes Wilson and Raymond L. Holmes
3501 E. 12th Street

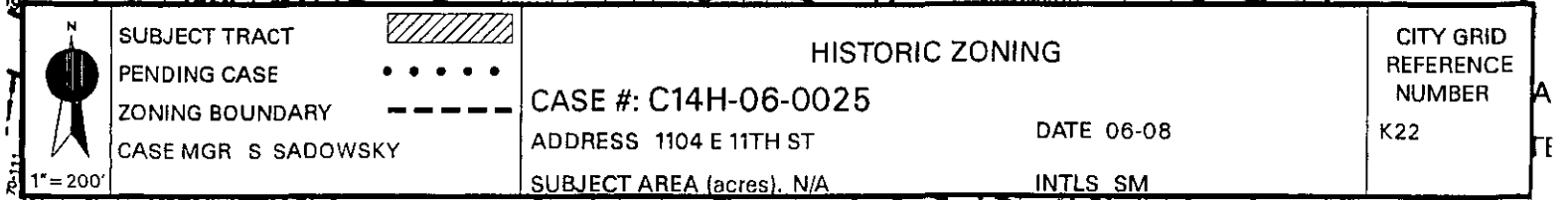
Austin, Texas 78721

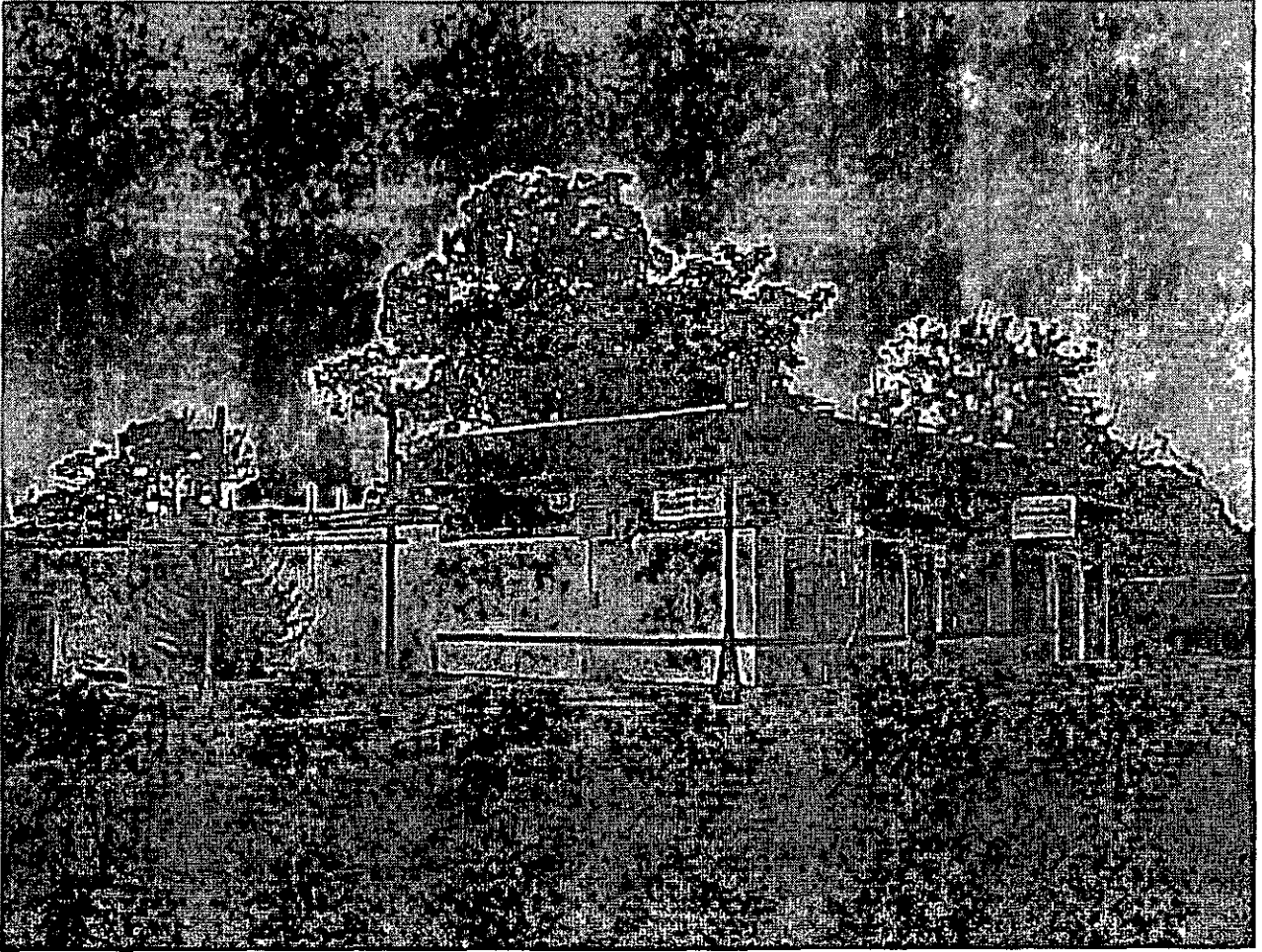
DATE BUILT: ca. 1947

ALTERATIONS/ADDITIONS: Patio addition enclosed ca. 1951; alterations to front façade; mansard roof, ca. 1988.

ORIGINAL OWNER(S): Johnny M. Holmes (1947)

OTHER HISTORICAL DESIGNATIONS: National Register of Historic Places





The Victory Grill
1104 E. 11th Street
ca. 1947

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM

1. NAME OF PROPERTY


HISTORIC NAME: Victory Grill
OTHER NAME/SITE NUMBER: N/A

2. LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER: 1104 E. 11th Street
CITY OR TOWN: Austin
STATE: Texas CODE: TX COUNTY: Travis CODE: 453 ZIP CODE: 78701
NOT FOR PUBLICATION: N/A
VICINITY: N/A

3. STATE/FEDERAL AGENCY CERTIFICATION

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this ☒ nomination
request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of
Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property
☒ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant ☐ nationally
☐ statewide ☒ locally (☐ See continuation sheet for additional comments)


Signature of certifying official

8-25-98
Date

State Historic Preservation Officer, Texas Historical Commission

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria
(☐ See continuation sheet for additional comments)

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. NATIONAL PARK SERVICE CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that this property is

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

☐ entered in the National Register
☐ See continuation sheet
☐ determined eligible for the National Register
☐ See continuation sheet
☐ determined not eligible for the National Register

☐ removed from the National Register

☐ other (explain)

5. CLASSIFICATION

OWNERSHIP OF PROPERTY: Private

CATEGORY OF PROPERTY: Building

| NUMBER OF RESOURCES WITHIN PROPERTY: | CONTRIBUTING | NONCONTRIBUTING |
|--------------------------------------|--------------|---------------------|
| | <u>1</u> | <u>—</u> BUILDINGS |
| | <u>—</u> | <u>—</u> SITES |
| | <u>—</u> | <u>—</u> STRUCTURES |
| | <u>—</u> | <u>—</u> OBJECTS |
| | <u>1</u> | <u>0</u> TOTAL |

NUMBER OF CONTRIBUTING RESOURCES PREVIOUSLY LISTED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER: 0

NAME OF RELATED MULTIPLE PROPERTY LISTING: N/A

6. FUNCTION OR USE

HISTORIC FUNCTIONS: COMMERCE Restaurant

CURRENT FUNCTIONS: RECREATION AND CULTURE Music facility and theater

7. DESCRIPTION

ARCHITECTURAL CLASSIFICATION: OTHER One-Part Commercial Block

MATERIALS: FOUNDATION CONCRETE
WALLS BRICK
ROOF ASPHALT
OTHER WOOD, GLASS

NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION (see continuation sheets 7-5 through 7-8)

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF PROPERTY: Less than an acre

| UTM REFERENCES | Zone | Easting | Northing | Zone | Easting | Northing |
|----------------|------|---------|----------|------|---------|----------|
| | ## | ##### | ##### | | | |

(see continuation sheet 10-19)

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION: (SEE CONTINUATION SHEET 10-19)

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION (see continuation sheet 10-19)

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME/TITLE: Karen D Riles

ORGANIZATION: History Programs

DATE: 4 September 1997

STREET & NUMBER: P O Box 12276

TELEPHONE: 512/ 463-6006

CITY OR TOWN: Austin

STATE TX

ZIP CODE: 78711-2276

ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION

CONTINUATION SHEETS

MAPS (see continuation sheet Map-20-21)

PHOTOGRAPHS (see continuation sheet Photo-25)

ADDITIONAL ITEMS (see Illustrations 22-24)

PROPERTY OWNER

NAME: Johnny Holmes

STREET & NUMBER: 3501 E 12th Street

TELEPHONE: 512/926-2673

CITY OR TOWN: Austin

STATE: TX

ZIP CODE: 78721

8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

APPLICABLE NATIONAL REGISTER CRITERIA

- ☒ **A** PROPERTY IS ASSOCIATED WITH EVENTS THAT HAVE MADE A SIGNIFICANT CONTRIBUTION TO THE BROAD PATTERNS OF OUR HISTORY
- ☐ **B** PROPERTY IS ASSOCIATED WITH THE LIVES OF PERSONS SIGNIFICANT IN OUR PAST
- ☐ **C** PROPERTY EMBODIES THE DISTINCTIVE CHARACTERISTICS OF A TYPE, PERIOD, OR METHOD OF CONSTRUCTION OR REPRESENTS THE WORK OF A MASTER, OR POSSESSES HIGH ARTISTIC VALUE, OR REPRESENTS A SIGNIFICANT AND DISTINGUISHABLE ENTITY WHOSE COMPONENTS LACK INDIVIDUAL DISTINCTION
- ☐ **D** PROPERTY HAS YIELDED, OR IS LIKELY TO YIELD, INFORMATION IMPORTANT IN PREHISTORY OR HISTORY

CRITERIA CONSIDERATIONS: G

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE: ENTERTAINMENT RECREATION

PERIOD OF SIGNIFICANCE: 1947-1973

SIGNIFICANT DATES: 1947, 1948, 1951, 1973

SIGNIFICANT PERSON: N/A

CULTURAL AFFILIATION: N/A

ARCHITECT/BUILDER: N/A

NARRATIVE STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE (see continuation sheets 8-9 through 8-17)

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHIC REFERENCES

BIBLIOGRAPHY (see continuation sheet 9-18)

PREVIOUS DOCUMENTATION ON FILE (NPS) N/A

- ☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- ☐ previously listed in the National Register
- ☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register
- ☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #

PRIMARY LOCATION OF ADDITIONAL DATA:

- ☒ State historic preservation office (*Texas Historical Commission*)
- ☐ Other state agency
- ☐ Federal agency
- ☐ Local government
- ☐ University
- ☐ Other -- Specify Repository

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National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 7 Page 5

Victory Grill
Austin, Travis County, Texas

Description

Victory Grill, constructed in 1947, is located at 1104 E 11th Street in the city of Austin, in Travis County. It is situated four blocks east of I-35 in East Austin. During its heyday, the Victory served the East Austin community as a combination cleaners/restaurant/night club. The 1948 patio addition was enclosed to provide an area for a night club in 1951 (see Map 21). On 10 October 1988, the roof of the original building burned as a result of a fire that started in an abandoned building on the corner of Waller and 11th Streets, then spread to the Grill. The Victory stands alone on this once thriving, bustling, commercial segment of East 11th Street. Currently, the building is used as a blues/jazz lounge with live theater performances. The building is in good repair and the proprietors have reopened the grill area. The fenestration of the building has been altered from its original appearance and the entire facade has been painted. The Victory Grill does however retain integrity of location, materials, feeling and association.

Geographical Setting and Physical Context of Property

Victory Grill stands just a short walk from the Capitol building in East Austin. It is bound on the west by Waller Street, on the east by Lydia Street, on the south by Juniper Street, and on the north by East 11th Street. East Austin, in the early part of the twentieth century, was separated from West Austin by East Avenue, a north/south oriented boulevard. The community was linked by the east/west running H&TC Railroad which was then 6th Street. According to Sanborn Fire Insurance maps, East Austin was already developing into a commercial, institutional, and residential hub by the 1900s (see Map 20). Several churches were located on East 1st Street and Robertson Hill, two African American colleges Tillotson and Samuel Huston were located on East 7th Street and East Ave, respectively, a private school for young African American women was established at 1611 Hackberry and two large and important burial grounds, the State Cemetery and Oakwood Cemetery, encompassed areas west of Tillotson College and south of East 19th Street (now Martin Luther King Boulevard). Businesses were concentrated along East Avenue, both sides of the H&TC and Austin & Northwestern railroad yards, and along Pecan or East 6th Street ("Historic Resources of East Austin" National Register Multiple Property Nomination 1986).

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Victory Grill
Austin, Travis County, Texas

Facade Description

The earliest photo of the current Victory Grill dates back to 1951 (see **Illustration 23**). The photo indicates that the principle façade, which faced south, was constructed of brick with a concrete foundation. Originally, the principle facade had five front doors and four windows. The building housed a dry cleaner's shop which was located in the west portion of the building in the early 1940s. Today, the principle facade has three front doors and three windows. One of the windows and doors on the west side of the principle facade has been covered up. An electric meter is mounted where a door once was. The entrance on the far east side of the principle facade is covered by a canopy (see **Photo 1**). This door is where the public enters the Kovac Lounge that is located in the 1948 addition (see **Map 21**). Signage hangs on the wall between the two windows on the east side of the principle facade. The roof of the building was originally flat. Now it has a shingled, mansard roof that covers the principle and part of the side facades of the original building.

The east facade faces Lydia Street and includes the walls of the 1951 alterations (see **Photo 2**). Originally, the 1948 addition was an open patio. It was enclosed with bricks and covered in stucco in 1951. Air conditioner units protrude from the wall of this facade. The roof of the addition is about a foot lower than that of the original building.

The west facade faces Waller Street (the Capitol building is visible from this side). Beside the building is a concrete slab where a shoe shine parlor once stood. The concrete slab extends to the first door on the west side of the addition. The bricks of this section were rebuilt with concrete blocks after the 1988 fire that destroyed it and the roof. The brick wall of the original section has an air condition unit that protrudes out of it. The mansard roof covers this portion of the original building. The walls of the addition are painted brick up to the first door. However, on the north side of the door the wall is brick covered in stucco that has been scored to resemble stone (see **Photos 3-4**). This is the only section of the building with this type of decoration. At the end of this section the back wall recesses about three feet. Here the walls are again brick covered in stucco. Two air condition units protrude from the wall. A porch cover, suspended by four steel cables, extends about twelve feet from the second air condition unit to the north corner of the building. An enclosed entrance that

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Victory Grill
Austin, Travis County, Texas

leads to the exit doors of the Kovac Theater (also Lounge) rest beneath the porch cover on a concrete slab. The enclosed entrance is covered in wood siding. It originally had a door on the west-facing wall and a window on the south facing wall. Both have been covered. There door is now on the north facing wall of the structure. Above the porch cover are twelve beams that extend out six inches from the surface of the wall to provide a surface to nail the wooden sign for the Kovac Theater (see Photos 4-5). The pattern of wood is repeated toward the south section of the building and terminates at the corner. The rear facade faces north (see Photos 5-6). This facade is painted, with the exception of a four feet wide section on the east corner. Like the others, there is an air condition unit protruding from this wall. Above the unit is a two feet square ventilation fan.

Floor Plan

The two-part floor plan of the Grill consists of the original restaurant area and the 1948 addition (see Map 21). The building is a one-part commercial block. The restaurant includes the bar and seating area, the kitchen with a meat preparation room on the west side, and Men's and Women's restrooms on the east side of the restaurant. The 1951 enclosed area became known as the Kovac Lounge. It is the live entertainment area of the Grill. It has three entryways from the restaurant section. The entrance located on the far east side of the restaurant leads only to the Kovac Lounge. There are two other entrances from the restaurant area. There is an entrance on the east side of the kitchen and an entrance inside the kitchen area. There are three steps leading down into the lounge on all entrances. At the west entrance is the women's restroom on the left and the bar on the right. There is also a men's restroom beside the women's. At the central entrance is the bar on the left and the raised seating area on the right. The bar is original to the addition (see Photo 7). There are two levels of seating. on the east side of the room are steps that lead up to a more private area (see Photos 8-9), and the lower level that is directly in front of the bar (see Photo 8). Both levels are decorated with the original 1950s tables, chairs, and booths (see Photos 8-9). All levels have an unobstructed view of the stage area. There is one back exit door located on the west wall next to the stage.

The roof of the original building was replaced after being destroyed by fire in 1988. The lounge area, which was closed off during that time, only received smoke damage. The building has been undergoing

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Victory Grill
Austin, Travis County, Texas

restoration ever since the 1988 fire

Summary

The Victory Grill has felt the impact of urban renewal, neighborhood deterioration, and the reality of changing times and tastes. However, the building still retains integrity of location, feeling, materials and association. Although the design of the building has been altered with the changes to fenestration of the original principal facade, the enclosure of the 1948 addition; the once flat roof has been made into a mansard; and the brick has been painted to make the Grill look more trendy, it still retains its essential identifying physical features. These features are the original 1947 section, the 1948 patio addition, which was enclosed in 1951, signage over the windows of the principle facade declaring the name, and its brick construction. Additionally, the intangible aspect of feeling, of which a blues and jazz venue is 99.9% of, is resurrected each time there is a live music performance with cars occupying the parking places outside the building, and music lovers again filling the sidewalks, and the 1950s tables, chairs, and booths help transform patrons back to another time. Moreover, the building is still associated with the heyday of East 11th Street and Johnny Holmes, a lover and promoter of an American original art form—the blues and jazz.

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Victory Grill
Austin, Travis County, Texas

SIGNIFICANCE

The original Victory Grill opened on Victory Over Japan Day in 1945. In 1947, Johnny Holmes the owner opened the new Victory Grill at 1104 E 11th Street to provide a place of entertainment for East Austinites and black soldiers from Forts Hood and Swift during World War II. Mr. Holmes is well known in Austin as a music promoter and restaurateur. During its heydays of the early 1940s through the late 60s, blues greats such as the Grey Ghost (Roosevelt T. Williams), Bobby "Blue" Bland, B.B. King, T.D. Bell and the Cadillacs, Erbie Bowser, Lavada Durst, Jean and the Rollettes, Hosea Hargrove, Ted Roddy, and Hook and the Hitchhikers and others were booked by Holmes to perform at the Grill. Moreover, the Victory Grill was part of what was termed the "Chitlin Circuit" which was the route that followed the major highways from the North to the South and encompassed the only venues blacks were allowed to play during the age of segregation. The Victory Grill fostered some of Austin's and the states' greatest blues and jazz talents of the 1940s, 50s, and 60s. It is the last extant building from the live-music era in East Austin on 11th St. The Victory Grill meets National Register Criterion A in the areas of Music and Entertainment at a local level of significance. Since the period of significance is less than fifty years, Criteria Consideration G is applied to the property.

History of East Austin

East Austin in the early part of the twentieth century was separated from West Austin by East Avenue, a north/south oriented boulevard. It was linked by the east/west running H&TC Railroad, which was then 6th Street. According to Sanborn Fire Insurance maps, East Austin was already developing into a commercial, institutional, and residential hub by the 1900s (see Map 20). Several churches were located on East 1st Street and Robertson Hill, two African American colleges, Tillotson and Samuel Huston were located on East 7th Street and East Ave., respectively, a private school for young African American women was established at 1611 Hackberry, and two large and important burial grounds, the State Cemetery and Oakwood Cemetery encompassed areas west of Tillotson Colleges and south of East 19th Street (now Martin Luther King Boulevard). Businesses were concentrated along East Avenue, both sides of the H&TC and Austin & Northwestern railroad yards, and along Pecan on East 6th Street ("Historic Resources of East Austin" National Register Multiple Property Nomination 1985).

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Victory Grill
Austin, Travis County, Texas

The ethnically diverse East Austin community had stores with names such as Bailetti, (later Haehnel's Store) at 1101 E 11th; Succetti Bros Grocery at 1000 E 11th Street, and Clito Alvarez Shoe Repair at 1106 East 11th (Austin Directory, 1924). This ethnic mix continued into the 1940s. The cultural diversity of the neighborhood would eventually yield to de facto segregation as white families moved out of the community and Mexican Americans moved in, a pattern that had started as early as the 1920s.

East 11th Street Today

Today, East Austin consists mostly of African and Mexican American cultural groups. Many of the old landmarks have been razed or have burned down. The block on which the Victory Grill stands is no exception. The hotel that once stood beside Victory burned in 1988. The homes that stood behind it are no longer there. The Grill and Shorty's Bar, located across the street from it, are the only buildings that remain on East 11th Street from East Austin's blues and jazz era of the early 1940s and early 1970s, respectively. Surrounding the east and back sides of the building are China and hackberry trees. Also, there are towering pecan and fragrant huisache trees near the east side of the building. West of the building along Waller Street are concrete slabs where commercial buildings and homes once stood. Also, East of the building are concrete slabs and vacant lots where homes and commercial buildings once stood. Many of the vacant lots on this block and within the neighborhood are now owned by the city of Austin.

Across the street from the Grill is the building that was once Shorty's, a jazz bar (formerly Haehnel's Grocery). On the east side of Shorty's are several vacant lots, beside it a former liquor store, beside it two occupied residences. The remainder of the block is commercial establishments that are currently in use. Towering above the neighborhood is one of Austin's historic Moonlight Towers, a 1976 National Register Landmark. The Show Bar/Charlie's Playhouse (jazz club) that stood at the corners of Lydia and 11th Streets, that at one time attracted white University of Texas students in the late 1970s, is now a vacant lot.

History of the Victory Grill

Johnny Holmes, owner of Victory Grill, was born in Waco on 19 July 1917. When he was six, Johnny moved to Bastrop to live with his grandmother. He loved to sing the blues, but he never learned to play an instrument. It was there that he got his first music promoting experience. He booked Roosevelt Thomas

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Victory Grill
Austin, Travis County, Texas

Williams, the "Grey Ghost", to play at his 7th grade graduation dance in 1933. Johnny picked dewberries to earn the \$3 charged by the renowned performer. The graduation dance took place in the historic Kerr Hall (listed on National Register 1978). This would not be the last time that Johnny hired the Grey Ghost to perform.

Johnny's prowess as a champion pole vaulter earned him an athletic scholarship to Samuel Huston College. He attended Huston College from 1937-39. There he met his future wife Winifred Van Zandt (see **Illustration 23**). They were married 11 February 1942. After leaving college, Holmes opened up a hamburger stand on E 11th Street in what used to be an old one-room ice house in 1945 (see **Illustration 22**). There he carved out a livelihood supplying food to his East Austin patrons and soldiers from Forts Hood and Swift (Although the exact address of the original building is not known, it is known that the hamburger stand stood across the street from where black Ft. Hood soldiers got off the bus on East 11th St). Business was not always good at the Grill, sometimes it was necessary "to run to the nearby grocery for meat after someone paid him for a burger. Holmes had always envisioned a place of entertainment where decent people and their families could come and be entertained. For this purpose he built the building at 1104 E 11th in 1947. Holmes, a religious man, did not smoke or sell hard liquor in his restaurant. His waitresses were required to wear starched maroon uniforms and nice shoes (Austin American Statesman, Section E, 1990). The Victory became the place to be if good food was your desire. The restaurant menu included fried chicken and fish, enchiladas, smothered steak, and hamburgers. Entire families from the community ate there after Sunday church services. But the ultimate draw to the Grill was the happening music in the Kovac Lounge (see **Photos 7-9**).

The patio of the Grill was enclosed in 1951. And Johnny christened the new space the Kovac Lounge after a club he visited while staying in Anchorage, Alaska. Inside the rectangular room was a bar made of block glass illuminated by red, green, and blue twinkling lights. Large multi-colored lights also hung from the ceiling. Artists performed on the small stage located at the north end of the room. The stage had a single-horizontal row of block glass across the front that echoed the design of the bar. Between the expanse of the bar and the stage were arrangements of small laminated-topped tables with matching chairs. Along the walls were café-style booths. The room according to Holmes was "fabulous".

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Victory Grill
Austin, Travis County, Texas

The Kovac Lounge was not the only club on and around East 11th Street. These clubs started to cut into the profits of the Victory Grill by lowering their beer prices from 25 cents to 15 cents or two for a quarter. In about 1951, Johnny decided he could make more money by renting the Grill and going to work somewhere else. That somewhere else was West Texas. It was there that he learned the art of music promotion. He was the promoter to book B. B. King in West Texas. Included in his first promotions were blues and rock and roll legends T. D. Bell, and Chuck Berry. Bell, a guitar player, would later become a member of the Victory's house band (Statesman 1990).

Holmes returned to Austin and the Grill and earned a reputation in the music community as a promoter in the 50s and 60s. He booked such acts as Lena Horne and the Ike and Tina Turner Review in the Doris Miller Auditorium. These are just some of the big names Holmes brought to Texas. The Grill was hoppin' again. Blue Monday, according to Holmes, marked the beginning of the week. Performances started at 12 noon and lasted until Midnight. Sometimes he would have breakfast dances that started at 5 and ending at 10 o'clock in the morning. The Grill stayed full on weekends. T. D. Bell remembers that the place would be so crowded that the people had to stand in line to get in. Holmes, who was always looking for ways to improve his establishment, held talent shows on weekends. The winner was determined by the applause of the audience and a case of beer was the prize. Holmes remembers that Bobby Blue Bland won the prize almost every time.

What Holmes will be remembered for most is the local and regional talent he booked to play in the Grill each week. The principle goal of the Grill was to entertain patrons with live blues and jazz music performed by the finest artisans available. In the 1950s, the pool from which to draw such musical talent was overflowing.

Local Talent

The Kovac Lounge of the Grill became the spawning pool for East Austin's black music talent. Many of these young aspiring musicians were Huston and Tillotson College students who got their professional start performing at the Grill. Both colleges had outstanding jazz and swing bands, respectively. Since the Grill sat in the middle of the two colleges, it became a common meeting place for students wanting to socialize and to show their "stuff." One such student was New York author, playwright, and composer Alton Rison. He introduced the scat piano style to the Victory while a student at Tillotson College in 1949. Rison wrote a play based on the

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Victory Grill
Austin, Travis County, Texas

life of Austinite Lavada Durst "Dr. Hep Cat," one of the city's first black disc jockeys who was also a regular performer at the Victory Grill

Regional Talent

Blues in Texas is an admixture of African American spirituals, the holler, and field songs that evolved out of the slave and plantation cultures of the early days of the state. Blues is a musical form of the oral tradition and the words of the music often reflect the life experiences of the performers. Many blues songs talk about surviving the Texas penal system or the labor gangs—"penitentiary blues." Blues singer Smoky Hogg used verses and words which had been sung by generations of black Texans who experienced life in the penitentiary. Similarly, blues singer Texas Alexander sings of "Tom Moore's Farm", a notorious plantation in Grimes County where the work was grueling, but the food was good. There were songs like "Penitentiary Blues" that make reference to Colonel Cunningham who worked convicts on lease from the prisons on his Brazos bottomland plantation.

Singers from the coastal plains, the old cotton and rice plantation regions, and the East Texas piney woods traveled about the state playing and singing their own style of the blues. In some cases, they imitated the blues greats whose styles were as unique as the regions they represented. Often imitated was the guitar style of Lightnin' Hopkins, and the Texas piano blues idioms made famous by such men as Son Becky, R. T. Williams "Grey Ghost", Robert Shaw and Black Boy Shine in the 1930s.

As a result of segregation, it was necessary for black musicians to travel what was called the "Chitlin Circuit" to perform in African American clubs and venues across the West, Midwest, and South regions of the United States. The circuit, which included travel along major highways and interstates, included places like Shorty's Bar in Elgin, and Walker's Auditorium in Waco. "These places were connected to the Victory Grill with the line extending eastward into New Orleans up through Mississippi and Tennessee, and on into Kansas City and Chicago offering continuous opportunity for black musicians to play music in this country and eke out a living doing it" (Chronicle 38). Several of these regional blues singers got their start at the Victory Grill, and then went on to achieve great fame. Musicians such as Bobby "Blue" Bland and B. B. King were regulars at the Grill in the 1940s. Bobby "Blue" Bland, then a soldier at Ft. Hood, would come every week and win first prize

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Victory Grill
Austin, Travis County, Texas

at the amateur contests.

Other music notables such as saxophonist "Taft" James Jordan; drummer, Charles Mack Moffett (Little Ditty), Bass fiddle player, Marcus Hemphill who produced the Broadway play "Innacent Black" and who wrote comedy for Bill Cosby; Mc Kinley Howard "Kenny" Dorham, who played piano for the Billy Eckstine Band, saxophonist, Leo Wright who played for Dizzy Gillespie and his Combo performed at the Victory Grill (interview with Alton Rison 1997).

End of an Era

Several mitigating circumstances contributed to the eventual closing of the Victory Grill. In the late 1960s, the music scene had already begun to change. And by the 1970s, bigger competing clubs like the Show Bar (later became Charlie's Playhouse) began to lure away the Grill's regular customers and performers. It became difficult for musicians to make a living in these changing times. Many of the old timers gave up the music business to take on more stable careers. The Show Bar, which was located one block east of the Grill, attracted a new kind of listening audience—white students from the University of Texas—also contributed to the end of the Grill. However bigger, the Show Bar nor the Victory Grill would escape the devastating effects of changing times and musical tastes. A new kind of music performer called "record hoppers" emerged during this time. Record hoppers were similar to disc jockeys in that they played records. This new breed of performer only needed a microphone, speakers, and a record changing table to entertain crowds. The use of such performers was preferred economically over the more costly live bands.

Just as segregation contributed to the creation of the Victory Grill, likewise, the end of segregation instigated its eventual demise. With the Supreme Court ruling in *Brown v. Topeka Board of Education* and the Civil Rights Bills of the 1960s, African Americans could now move into neighborhoods that were once off limits to them. The lack of commercial development in East Austin hastened the exodus of families from the community into developing neighborhoods throughout Austin in the 1970s (interview with R. V. Adams, 1998). Sidewalks that were once so crowded that it was necessary sometimes to walk in the streets to pass thinned as businesses closed down one by one. However, the ultimate blow to the livelihood of the live music scene and the Victory Grill would be a change in musical taste. It was the 1970s and disco music became the new music

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Victory Grill
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craze This new electronic sound appealed primarily to the younger music listeners. Eventually, the music scene shifted from the Victory Grill and East Austin to places like the Armadillo World Headquarters and others like it in West Austin. The Grill finally closed in 1973.

In 1987, Johnny Holmes re-opened the Grill's Kovac Lounge to host the Texas Blues Reunion on Juneteenth weekend (19th of June). The event featured performers (see **Illustration 24**) who had not performed in the Grill for decades. Among the performers was guitarist and vocalist T. D. Bell and the Cadillacs, pianist Erbie Bowser, pianist and vocalist R. T. Williams "the Grey Ghost", Little Willie Bell, Jean and the Rollettes, Yvetta Turner, Hosie Hargrove, Blues Boy Hubbard and the Jets, L. Pearson, W. C. Clark, and Lavada Durst "Dr. Hep Cat" (Statesman, 1987)

In 1988, a fire that started in a building on the corner of Waller and 11th Streets spread to the Grill partially destroying the original section of building. Fortunately, the 1948 addition that had been closed off from the rest of the building received only smoke damage. The restaurant area however received extensive damage to its roof and the west wall.

Friends of Johnny Holmes launched a series of events to benefit the rebuilding of the Grill. On January 14, 1989 a party was thrown in what was Shorty's Bar across the street from the Victory Grill. It was organized by the Huston-Tillotson College Revitalization Committee, together with the 11th Street Village Association. Many of the performers from the 1987 Texas Blues Reunion attended the affair, including the Grey Ghost, Lavada Durst, T. D. Bell, Erbie Bowser, Hosie Hargrove, Jean and the Rollettes, including James Polk, Hook and the Hitchhikers, the Mannish Boys, Ted Roddy, Carlos Thompson and George Underwood. Shorty's Bar was decorated to look like the Victory grill (Statesman, 1989).

A New Vision for the Grill

When Johnny Holmes opened the original Victory Grill in 1945, he envisioned a place where decent people and their families could come to be entertained. It re-opened on Juneteenth 1991 with Eva Lindsey as the new proprietress. She is perpetuating Holmes' vision with a new twist. Lindsey envisions the live music venue as being a forum for cultural and community revival. The Victory Grill works collaboratively with a variety of East Austin organizations in revitalizing cultural life in the East 11th and 12th Street Corridor. Local

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Victory Grill
Austin, Travis County, Texas

organizations use the stage in the Grill for poetry readings, children's shows, play productions, musical events, comedy night, theater classes and other activities ' The Victory is a cultural keystone to East Austin. Its recognition as a historic landmark is paramount to its continued survival as a cultural link to the community's past

Integrity

The Victory Grill still stands in its original 1947 location. After the fire of 1988 the roof was replaced, and other incidental repairs were made. The building retains its original construction materials of brick and stucco. With the exception of the change in fenestration and the addition of the mansardian roof on the principle facade, the building retains its original appearance. Most of the historic buildings that constituted East 11th Street have been torn down or destroyed by fire. Likewise, most of the buildings that marked East 11th as a blues and jazz mecca have also been destroyed or stand silent. As a result, East 11th Street has lost its integrity of feeling as a whole. However, the Grill as an individual component of that collective feeling still evokes the sensation of the jazz and blues heyday of the 40s, 50s, and 60s. The west wall that was destroyed in the 1988 fire was replaced and the exterior of the building is brightly painted yellow and blue. Signage declares that it is a blues and jazz establishment, just as it has throughout its period of significance. Inside the Kovac Lounge of the Grill are the original bar, tables, chairs, and booths. The decor of the room has hardly been altered from its original appearance with the stage and bar standing in their original locations inside the room. Each time there is a live music performance the feeling of the old days at the Grill are reborn. When the doors are opened, passersby are lured in by the music and excitement. Although the Grill is currently under new management, the property is still owned and associated with Johnny Holmes, music promoter and restaurateur.

Summary

The Victory Grill was built in 1947 to provide a place for East Austinites to eat and hear live blues and jazz music. As a promoter, Holmes contributed greatly to the live music scene in East Austin during the 1940s, 50s, and 60s by booking local and regional talents from throughout Texas and the South to play at the Grill. Many of the local musicians who performed in the Grill went on to become big names in the blues and jazz.

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Victory Grill
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industry. Jazz greats, such as, Kenny Dorham, James Jordan, Charles Moffett, Marcus Hemphill, Leo Wright, and Alton Rison are just some of those who performed. Others became local legends, such as, Lavada Durst "Dr. Hepcat", Robert Shaw, Erbie Bowser, T. D. Bell, and the Grey Ghost, just to name a few. The Grill sustained some damage in a 1988 fire, however, the fire caused only major damage to the west wall and roof of the original restaurant section and smoke damage to the 1948 addition. Despite the chronic deterioration of the properties surrounding it, the Grill is in excellent repair and is currently undergoing restoration of the interior of the original building. The building retains integrity of location, feeling, materials, and association. The Victory Grill meets National Register Criterion A in the area of Music and Entertainment at the local level of significance. Since the Period of Significance is less than fifty years, Criteria Consideration G is applied. Criteria Consideration G permits the inclusion of properties like Victory Grill that are rare surviving examples of buildings associated with a particular era. In this case, the property is associated with East Austin's live-music era of the 1940s, '50s, and '60s. This criteria also grants latitude in accepting a greater degree of alteration or fewer features provided that enough of the property survives for it to be a significant resource.

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Victory Grill
Austin, Travis County, Texas

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55 min

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Victory Grill
Austin, Travis County, Texas

| UTM REFERENCES | Zone | Easting | Northing |
|----------------|------|---------|----------|
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GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Verbal Boundary Description: South 104 5 ft of West 10 67 , lot 61 and South 104 5 ft of East 33 47 ft , lot 62 out lot 55 division B

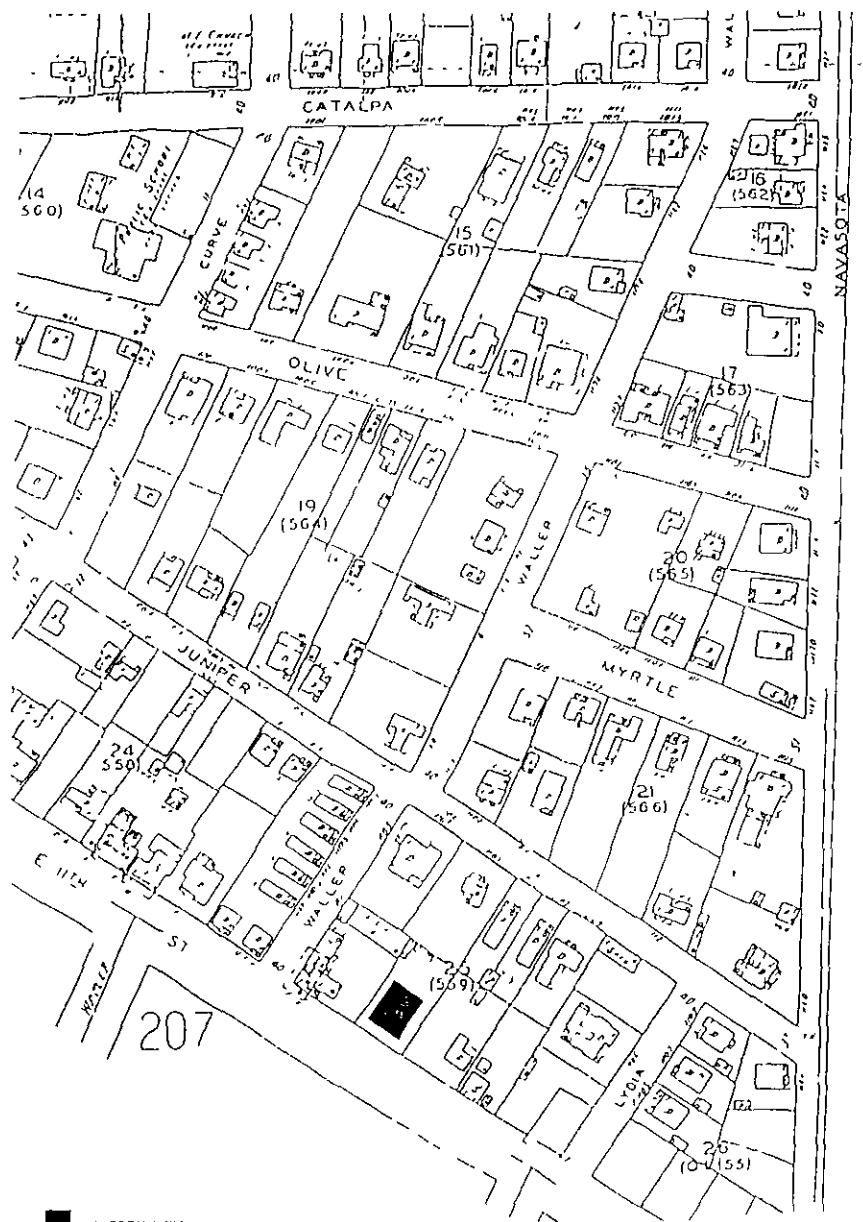
Boundary Justification: The boundaries include all property historically associated with the 1947 building that retains its historic location

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Victory Grill
Austin, Travis County, Texas



VICTORY GRILL

SANBORN MAP OF EAST 11TH STREET,
1952

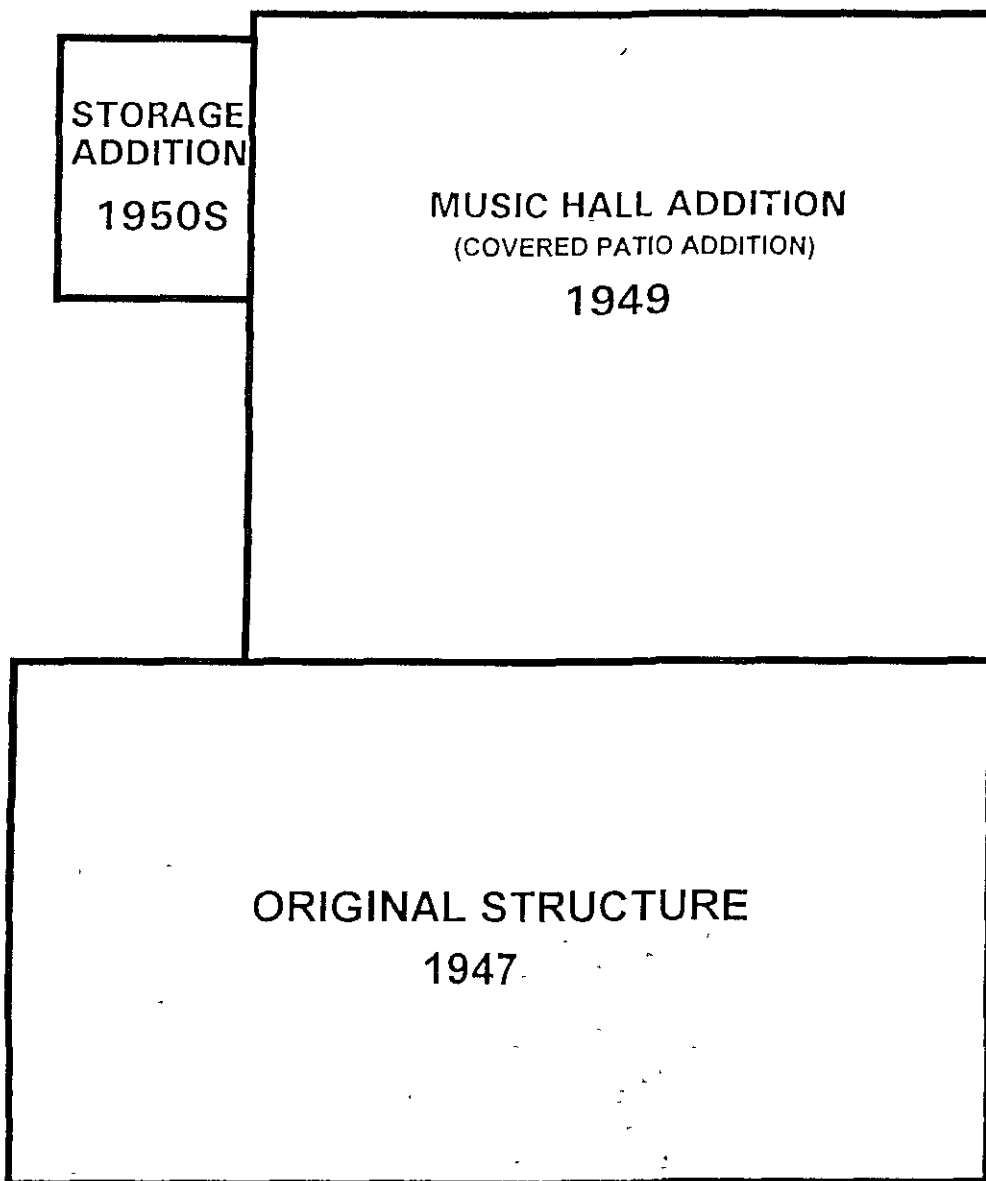
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NORTH
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Victory Grill
Austin, Travis County, Texas



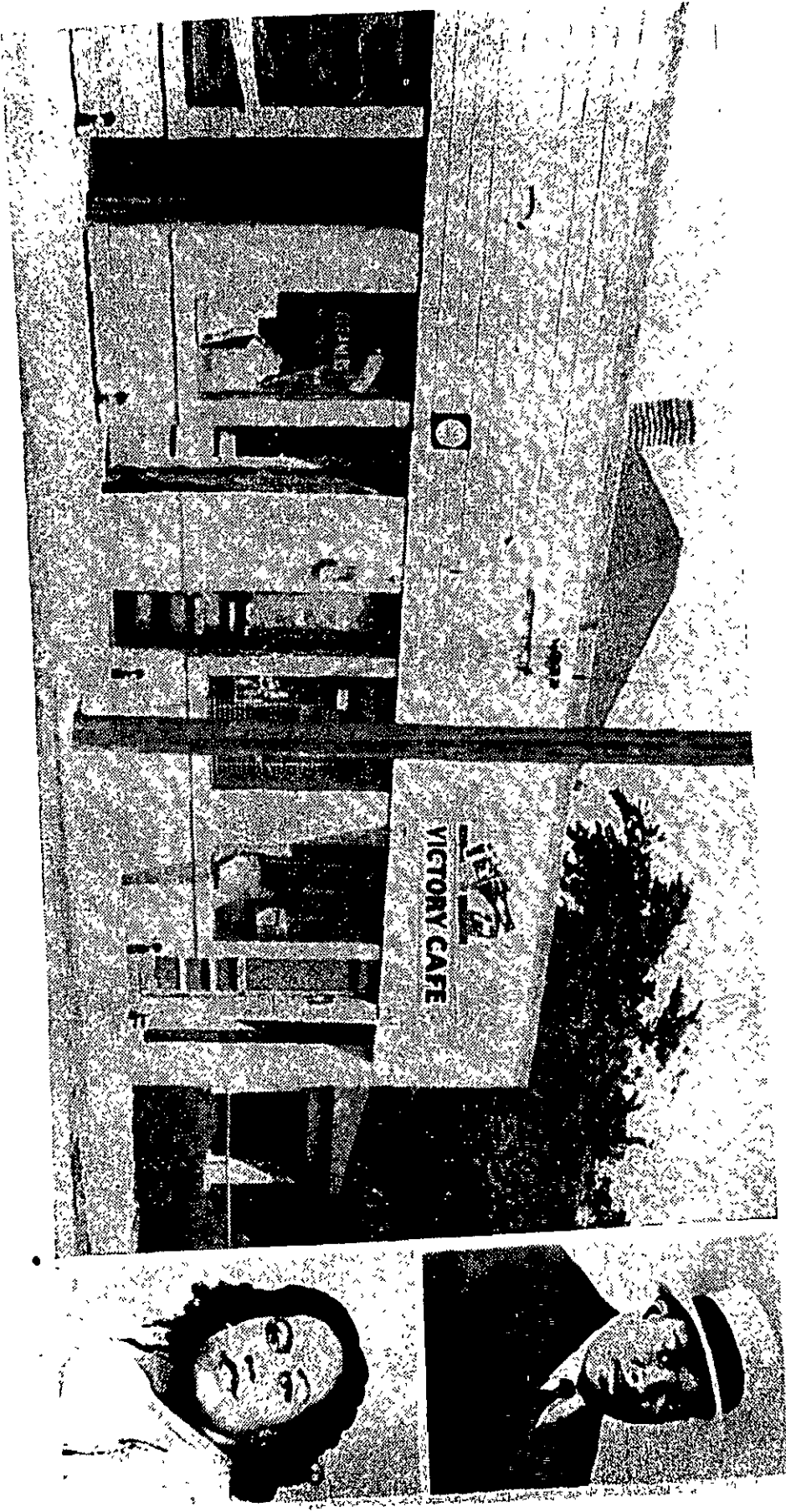
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Site Plan

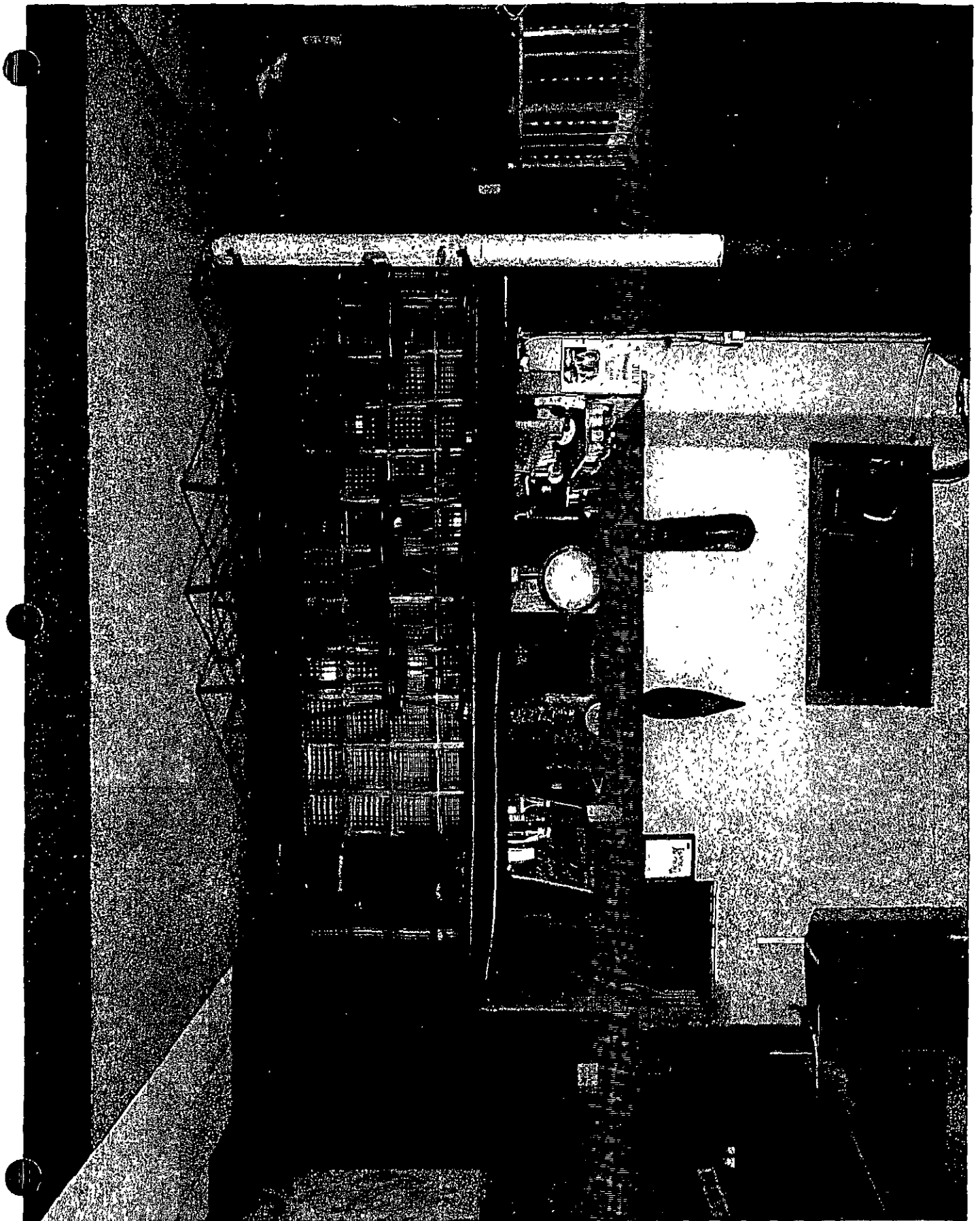


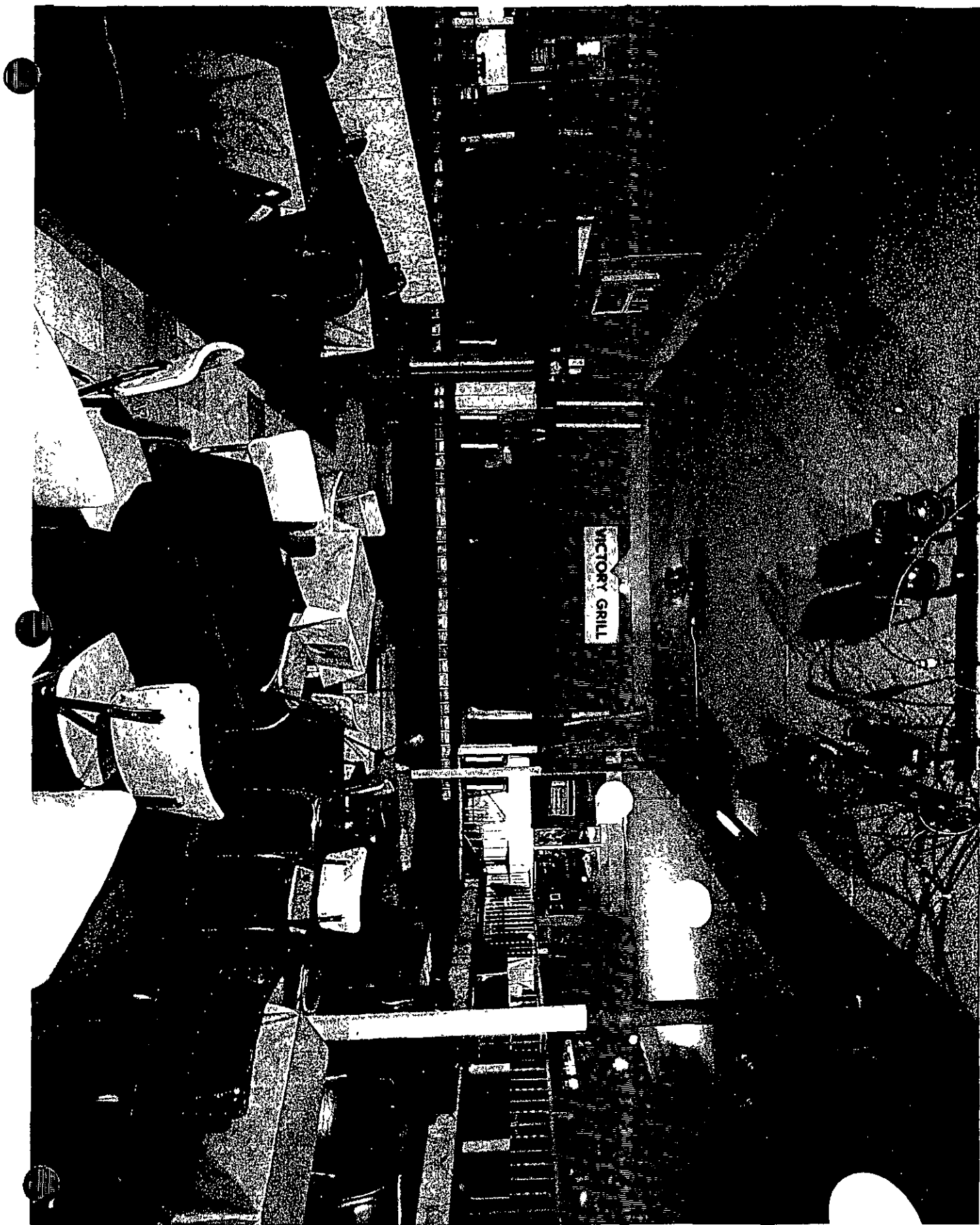


THE VICTORY CAFE











Sunday, August 19, 1990 Austin American-Statesman

Since a fire shut down the Victory Grill in 1988, owner Johnny Holmes has been determined to rebuild the longtime East Side institution — and rouse the ghost of the nightclub out back. It's been a long road, but the cause has captured the imagination of Austinites hungry for history, for the era and aura symbolized by the.



Starting in the 1940s the Victory Grill was a congregating spot for East Austinites who came for everything from soul food and enchiladas to blues in the back nightclub

SPIRITS OF THE VICTORY

By Michele Stanush
American-Statesman Staff

The ALCOA aluminum plant in Rockdale had recently hired itself a new janitor — a chub by kid named "T.D." Bell — when a tall man with a straw hat cocked to one side came to town.

The stranger went straight to Ruby's Place, a cafe and beer joint owned by Bell's mother, Ruby. He asked for T.D. who was there but kept his mouth shut.

"My mother said 'What do you want with him?'" remembers Bell. "And he said 'I've got a nightclub in Austin. The Victory Grill.'"

"And I heard he played the blues."

The stranger knew that T.D. didn't just play the blues. That kid did it like the legendary T-Bone Walker. T.D. tickled that "gut-tar." And he made those lyrics go down nice and smooth, often launching off with T-Bone's "Bobbysox Baby."

Bobbysox baby

I've got to let you go

You've got a big head full a nothin

But stage screen and radio

Wasn't too long before T.D. was climbing up on the plywood stage in that back nightclub on East 11th Street.

The year was 1948 and everything was — well — "abba dabba."

Only a few years before the Victory had been a little hamburger shack. Now it was becoming an East Austin institution — a place with clean cotton tablecloths and pretty waitresses that catered to everyone from black preachers to soldiers.

And in the back of the Victory was a fine new blues club. Blue, red and green lights twinkled behind glass tiles that lined the bar. Colored lights the size of foot tubs hung from the ceiling.

Bell was an instant star. Sent the ladies swooning.

"I did some things that," Bell — now 67 — laughs shaking a fat Trevisa Club cigar. "You know my first few nights here. Some of 'em I can't tell you."

You treat me like a stranger

You don't have a word to say

I ask you for some lovin

And you said 'What will my Daddy say?'

The stranger in the hat was Johnny Holmes — a Baptist who didn't smoke, didn't drink, didn't sell hard liquor. A strict boss who demanded his waitresses wear starched moon uniforms and nice shoes, sending them home if they showed up in "slip-ons."

He served awful good smothered steak and spicy enchiladas in the restaurant front of the nightclub. And blues musicians out back — everyone from Bell to T.B. Williams the "Grey Ghost" — could keep the crowds swinging and swaying.

It's become the stuff of local legend that a kid named Bobby Blue Bland would come in every week from Fort Hood, where he was stationed, and win first prize at the amateur contests.

And over the next three decades, the club also was to attract luminaries such as B.B. King, who would bring his entourage over and strum a little guitar on stage after giving auditorium shows in downtown Austin.

But, Holmes sometimes wondered, did God approve of the blues?

"I don't see no place in the Bible about the blues!"

See Victory, E16



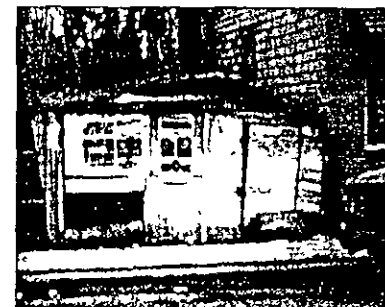
The Victory attracted soldiers stationed at nearby military bases who often arrived by the busload from Fort Hood and Fort Swift



Staff photo by Taylor Johnson



Owner Johnny Holmes, far left, sits in what was the cafe part of the Victory, gutted by fire in 1988. Holmes is trying to get enough money to finish reconstructing his business. At left, Henry "Blues Boy" Hubbard was one of several musicians whose early careers were nourished at the Victory.



The Victory, run by Johnny and Winifred Holmes, still stands at 1104 E. 11th St. left: It started as a hamburger hut down the block.

Victory Grill spirit lives in drive to reopen blues club

Continued from E1

don't see it. Have you?" he said one recent afternoon. "I said it to myself. I said, 'Johnny. You're straddling the fence. You either get on one side and stay, or get off the whole thing.' So I try to pray that off at night. And daytime too."

Today, the plywood stage is draped in shadows. Torn insulation from the ceiling hangs over it like Spanish moss.

It's dark and musty back there. And awfully quiet. There's only a little light that comes into the black from one window way up near the ceiling. It lets in a thick square of sun that falls on an old bar, thick with dust and the ghost of amber beer bottles.

In the room up front, where Victory patrons used to hover over coffee and thick pork chops, the sunlight has an easier time. It pours through big windows into the old cafe and lands on Johnny Holmes, sitting one recent hot afternoon in an old restaurant chair.

The light plays on his face, unlined and smooth despite more than seven decades under a hot Texas sun.

There's no denying it. East 11th Street, or at least a big hunk of it, is dead. Old vacant buildings are boarded and quiet. Broken glass glimmers in vacant lots. At least the hookers aren't anything like they used to be. "Walking around the block," says Holmes, waving a long arm in a circle. "Like it was a show. Like it was a carnival. They couldn't come into the Victory with G-strings on."

It's been quite a while since the Victory vibrated night after night with the blues.

Back in the mid '70s, Holmes closed down the nightclub out back. Business had slowed like molasses. The city had changed, the music scene had changed, and desegregation had cracked open a whole city of nightclubs to East Austin blacks who had helped keep the Victory alive.

Holmes didn't close everything down. He kept that front cafe going — dishing out that smothered steak, pork chops and those famous Victory Grill enchiladas (from a recipe he'd learned years before while working as a pot washer at the Night Hawk for 10 cents an hour).

Then, in late 1988, flames from a fire in an old building next door danced into the Victory, eating out the west wall, much of the kitchen and most of the cafe ceiling.

And the Victory closed for good.

Since then, Holmes has been trying to rebuild the cafe — and to rouse the ghost of the nightclub. He's had lots of support — from East Austin business people to West Austin blues lovers.

Mayor Lee Cooke even proclaimed one day last August as "Johnny Holmes and Victory Grill Appreciation Day."

But it's been a long road. And money has come only in plunks and nibbles.



T.D. Bell, left, Ernie Bowser, Johnny Holmes and Henry "Blues Boy" Hubbard outside the Victory Grill



Holmes and his wife Winifred, now deceased during headier times when the Victory Grill was young



Blues luminary B.B. King, left, would bring his entourage over to Holmes' nightclub and strum a little guitar on stage when he came to town

There was a time when Holmes sang the blues himself — as a skinny black kid in Beatrop who spent hour after hour crouched over endless rows of lily white cotton bolls.

Sometimes those lyrics could get a little vulgar. He knew that when you sing them soft and low, so the old folks won't hear. Singing the blues helped keep the fingers flying on the kid who became a state-champion picker. But there were times when his spirits sagged.

"One day, I was picking cotton and I was standing there, halfway up with my hands on my knees. And I was sayin' to myself, 'Is this going to be my life? Is there another way?'"

"And my grandmother tipped up behind me, and put a corn stalk on me."

The whack set Johnny back to work, but the questions nagged him. Was this going to be his life? What there another way? He decided his salvation would be school.

Holmes was drawn to Austin

by Tillotson College — a black school that handed an athletic scholarship to the tall, skinny kid who played everything from basketball to football and later became a champion pole vaulter.

At Tillotson, Holmes says, he got spoiled by teachers who gave him Bs instead of Fs because of his athletic prowess. And he sometimes copied test notes from Winifred Vanzandt, a smart and pretty classmate he wooed by sticking a note in her waist-long curls. They were later married.

But geometry and biology weren't destined to be in his future. And on V.J. Day 1945, Johnny Holmes opened the first Victory Grill — a little shack on

East 11th Street where he fried up hamburgers. Times were lean, he had to run to a nearby grocery for meat after someone paid him for a burger.

Later, when his landlady took back the property, Holmes moved into a larger building next door — expanding to a cafe with a palm-studded patio out back that he says was "real swanky."

When jealous neighbors started chunking beer bottles into his patio, Holmes put on a roof. As the business grew, Holmes decided to find a house band that would set the place hopping.

And that's when he set out looking for T.D. Bell.

Holmes mused Tillotson college for both his patrons and his waitresses. The girls there, after all, were awfully pretty.

"I was able to get a little bit classier girls, and better looking girls than the rest of the places had. And I didn't have to have that slum-type. I knew that was what would keep it from being one of them low types, as we called it."

And the place jumped and jived most nights of the week, including a "breakfast dance" that started at 5 a.m. every Monday.

"More guys got fired on Monday cause they'd be here all that evening. Their boss would come write 'em a note, and put on there, 'Just keep on stayin' at the

Victory and dance. We got some body else."

Then, 'round about 1951, Holmes left town.

Competing clubs around 11th street were dropping their beer prices from 25 cents to 15 cents, or two for a quarter. And he figured he could make more money by renting out the Victory and working somewhere else.

So he packed up Winifred, now his wife, and went to West Texas to cook. And there, he became a promoter — booking T.D. Bell who had encouraged him to head West in the first place, and bringing blues men like B.B. King and Chuck Berry to Texas.

But back in Austin, the Victory kept on vibrating. Bell would come back periodically before eventually moving back for good. And so did people like Ernie Bowser, a hot young self-taught piano player that Holmes had discovered in Odessa.

"I didn't even know a flat from a sharp until I was 30 years old," remembers Bowser, who moved to Austin before Bell returned but later joined him as part of T.D. Bell and the Cadillac.

"(But) whatever you want, I can play it."

And there were musicians like Henry "Blues Boy" Hubbard, a jet mechanic stationed at Bergstrom who'd wandered into the Victory one night in 1956. That night, the piano player was in jail — and Hubbard landed a gig.

If the Victory was swinging, though it wasn't the only place hopping on 11th Street. Hubbard for one, was later lured away by Tony Von, owner of the bigger Show Bar up the street. That club, which was much bigger than the Victory, later became Charley's Playhouse — a funky joint that attracted throngs of white students from the University of Texas.

And Hubbard says he lured away a lot of the business from the Victory when he left.

"The Show Bar had window shutters that opened up in the summertime, and you could look right in there at the people. And people would come by and say, 'Whoa! They're sure having a lot of fun. And pretty soon the place was packed.'"

By the 1970s, the East Austin blues scene had slipped into silence. Holmes had returned to run the Victory in 1964, but times and tastes were changing — and a decade later he finally closed the nightclub.

And, little by little, many of the musicians starting putting down their instruments.

"I played around 'til the record hopper came out," says Bell. "That was a guy just like a disc jockey. He would go out by himself and set up his P.A. system and spin records. That was happening everywhere you looked, and that killed the bands."

Bell turned his focus on his dump-truck business Hubbard, one of the few musicians able to avoid a day job during the heyday, took a job as a maintenance mechanic at the State Hospital.

"I got to an age where I need social security, retirement, hospitalization, all of that," says Hubbard. "I got \$1 million of hospitalization and the state pay for it. If I die tomorrow, I'll be worth something to somebody, you know."

But on a hot Juneteenth week end in 1987, the Victory started shaking and shivering again with some heavy rhythm and blues.

It was a two-day reunion spearheaded by local music hustler Tary Owens, who for 10 years had dreamed of bringing back some of the old musicians who'd once vibrated the Victory.

Other blues venues in Austin

"(At first) I gave him the brutal off 'cause I figured he was just another fellow coming in," remembers Holmes. "I said 'Here's another white boy just comin' in. You know (But) I said, 'If you've been working on it 10 years, I'd be less than a man not to try to help you out.'"

It was a reunion that featured everyone from T.D. Bell and the Cadillac to Blues Boy Hubbard and the Jets, and succeeded in throwing a new spotlight on the nightclub as well as reviving the careers of some of the old blues masters.

The blues, after all, are hard to shake.

And Holmes is still hoping to get the Victory hopping again — maybe within the next two months — as both a legacy to history and something to hand down to his three children (although he's not quite sure he'll run the club himself).

And if he finds he doesn't have any money to work with well — maybe Providence will step in.

"In the '40s, when I was putting on the back part, I ran out of money. But they (the carpenters) wouldn't stop work. They said, 'We believe you're gonna make money and we be here you'll pay us.'"

City of Austin



Proclamation

WHEREAS, the Victory Grill, one of Austin's finest historical treasures, is recognized as the home of rhythm and blues in Austin; and

WHEREAS, the Victory Grill was opened on VJ Day in 1945 as a popular venue for local talent such as Grey Ghost (Roosevelt T. Williams) and Dr. Hepcat (Lavada Durst), as well as up-and-coming acts touring the area such as B.B. King and Bobby Bland; and

WHEREAS, Johnny Holmes, owner and proprietor of the famous nightclub was instrumental in bringing blues acts to Austin from all across the country; and

WHEREAS, plans are underway to restore this early musical landmark after the building was damaged by a fire last year; and

WHEREAS, a benefit for the Victory Grill will be held on Sunday, August 29, 1989 at Antones from 2:00 p.m. until 2:00 a.m. and will feature an extensive repertoire of blues performers;

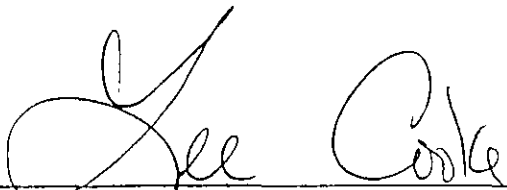
NOW THEREFORE, I, Lee Cooke, Mayor of the City of Austin, Texas, do hereby proclaim Thursday, August 24, 1989, as

JOHNNY HOLMES AND VICTORY GRILL APPRECIATION DAY

in Austin, and call on all citizens in Austin to join me in recognizing Johnny Holmes and his legendary Victory Grill for their collective contributions to the American Music Industry and to the development of blues music and for the countless hours of pleasure they have brought to so many music lovers.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the Great Seal of the City of Austin, Texas, to be affixed this 24th day of August, 1989, A.D.

ATTEST:

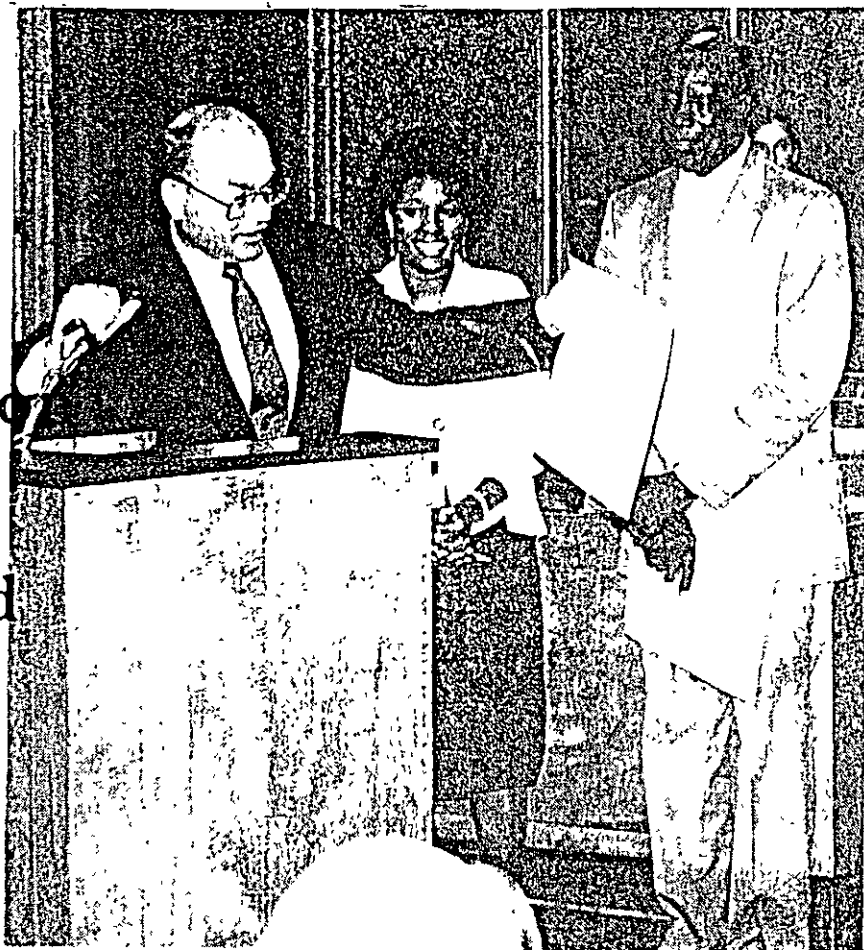


Lee Cooke

ENTERTAINMENT

Victory Grill appreciation day proclaimed by Mayor Cooke

photo by Bob Hall



FUND RAISER...(L to R) Mayor Lee Cooke proclaims Sunday Victory Grill Appreciation Day. Johnny Holmes, owner of the historical blues bar that burned last fall. A blues show to benefit the Victory Grill was held last Sunday at Antones Night Club. Creola Shaw-Dos Rios of the Capital City Chamber is also pictured.

Public access TV wins award

Austin Community Television (ACTV), manager of Austin's public access television service, along with Elmer Akins, gospel radio announcer and long time public access television producer, and "Deep in the Heart," live call-in show are cited as rationale for "Public Access Television" receiving one of ten "Connie" Awards in 1988.

premiered this year on Austin Access cable channel 10 and is currently replaying at 10 a.m. Friday and 1 a.m. Sunday morning.

ACTV, a national public access pioneer, has managed Austin's public access television since 1973. Through the city of Austin's franchise with Austin CableVision, ACTV currently manages channels 10, 32 and

Hall of Fame" for best dramatic series and Frederick Wiseman for outstanding achievement in television documentary.

Metro shuttle service set for festival

Capital Metro will offer special shuttle service to the Bud Dr

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Texas BLUES REUNION

AN EXTRAORDINARY MUSICAL EVENT took place in Austin, Texas, during Juneteenth Weekend, 1987: for the first time in twenty years "T. D. BELL & THE CADILLACS" took the stage at the Victory Grill. They were joined by a host of other fine blues musicians who spanned five generations of Texas musical tradition.

AUSTIN'S MUSIC SCENE is famous throughout the world and is well known for its strong blues roots. Many people do not realize, however, that this musical tradition did not begin in the late 1960s, but was laid down on Austin's East 11th Street, a thriving music district which flourished during the 40s, 50s and early 60s, drawing talented young musicians from throughout Central Texas. Here every night, great music could be heard at any one of a number of clubs.

THE VICTORY GRILL was a leading music venue during this era. Johnny Holmes, who opened the Grill on V.J. Day 1945, was not only the club owner, but also a music promoter who booked blues greats such as B. B. King and Bobby Blue Bland throughout Texas. In fact, Bobby Blue Bland got his Texas start at Victory Grill talent shows.

"T.D. BELL & THE CADILLACS" was the house band at the Victory Grill. For twenty years this band backed up the national stars Johnny Holmes booked, toured throughout Texas on their own, and, most importantly, nurtured the careers of many younger musicians, like Blues Boy Hubbard and W. C. Clark.

T. D. BELL played guitar and sang; ERBIE BOWSER was on keyboards; they were joined from time to time by R. T. Williams, the GREY GHOST, who began his musical career playing Minstrel Shows in the 1920s. And there were many many other musicians who were part of the "scene." Then in the late 60s, times began to change. "T. D. Bell & The Cadillacs" disbanded, as the Austin music scene shifted to a younger, mostly white set of musicians and moved to such places as the Armadillo World Headquarters. The music on East 11th Street was mostly stilled.

NOW THIS IMPORTANT TEXAS MUSIC TRADITION has been captured on video. Persuaded by Tary Owens and others, Johnny Holmes re-opened the Victory Grill's back ballroom and the musicians agreed to play for Juneteenth Weekend, 1987. The concert was an astounding success. Not too long after, it was reprised by Clifford Antone at his famous club Antone's, and, in a happy spin-off, the careers of the central musicians have been revived and they are now actively playing again.

THE TEXAS BLUES REUNION VIDEO, an hour in length, features the concert and the wide range of Texas Blues music which took place: the classic blues and pop tunes of R. T. Williams, The Grey Ghost, now 84; the deeply country blues of Hosea Hargrove and Little Willie Bell; the urban blues of "T. D. Bell & The Cadillacs" as popularized in the 50s and 60s; the current music of W. C. Clark, "Blues Boy Hubbard & the Jets," and L. P. "Big Pete" Pearson who flew in from Phoenix just for the concert; and many others.

THE HEARTWARMING STORIES of the central musicians are intercut with the concert, telling of a time when there was a real sense of family among musicians and when there was more good music than 11th Street could hold. Lavada Durst, who was known as "Dr. Hop Cat" when he was the first Black Deejay in Central Texas, is the narrator. B. B. King and Bobby Blue Bland appear in special guest interviews. The video is of broadcast quality, designed for PBS-type distribution.

Texas Blues Reunion
Is a production of
Martha Hartzog, Paul Congo & Tary Owens

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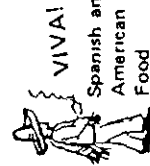
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