



HOUSTON

AmnesiaHouston.org

CALENDAR ALERT

For Immediate Release

Contact: James Glassman james@amnesiahouston.org 713-725-4867

Event: Amnesia Houston Celebrates Houston's Oldest Bar

When: Tuesday, August 21, 2007. 6:00 PM

Where: Leon's Lounge, 1006 McGowen at Main Street.

PRESS RELEASE

Amnesia Houston has spent months researching, and can state for the record that **Leon's Lounge** is Houston's oldest bar. Amnesia Houston is hosting a happy hour to celebrate Houston's history and support a great Houston landmark.

While La Carafe at 813 Congress in the Kennedy Bakery Building can safely claim to be Houston's oldest, existing *commercial* building, the bar itself did not open until 1962. The West Alabama Ice House at 1919 West Alabama is certainly one of Houston's oldest, but various names, owners, addresses, and functions erode at any claim to oldest bar. Similarly, Kay's Lounge at 2324 Bissonnet operated first as a restaurant then as a bar, but the Houston City Directory indicates periods of vacancy, and the first listing for "Kay's Lounge" appears in 1962.

And then there's Leon's Lounge at 1006 McGowen. In 1953, Leon Yarborough bought the property, but may not have changed the bar's name immediately from "La Bamba Bar." The city directory first lists "Leon's Bar" at the address in 1955, and Leon's has operated continuously at that location since. Inside, its narrow main room, dominated by a long wood bar, is decorated with old stained-glass windows that, rumor has it, were salvaged from one of the many Main Street mansions in the area torn down around the time the bar opened.

Amnesia Houston was founded by **James Glassman** in 2006. With the loss of favorites like **Cactus Records** and the possible impending demolition of **River Oaks Shopping Center** and **Alabama Theater**, Glassman decided it was time to raise awareness of unique Houston history, and reintroduce Houston to Houstonians.

At the Amnesia Houston website:

- Read and contribute to *Houstorian* – a collection of stories telling the tale of particular pieces of Houston’s history. Check out topics like **Jefferson Davis Hospital, Old Sixth Ward**, or contribute your own story.
- Read and contribute to *Lost Houston* – a collection of stories describing landmarks no longer with us. Check out the entry on the **Shamrock Hotel** or **Astroworld**.
- Discover *Endangered Houston* to get updates on your favorite, existing landmarks that are in jeopardy. Check on the status of the **Astrodome, The Black Labrador, Hermann Park Train**, or **River Oaks Theater**.
- Submit photos and share stories of past and existing landmarks.
- View and download old maps of Houston.
- Take neighborhood Walking Tours with your iPod. Amnesia Houston will offer downloadable *Podcasts*, giving visitors a chance to learn and live simultaneously the history of a site. Or, listen to a lecture from the Amnesia Houston archive.

James Glassman, a third generation Houstonian, graduated from St. John’s School, and later received a Bachelor of Arts in History from Kenyon College. Following his return to Houston, he enrolled at the University of Houston, Gerald Hines College of Architecture where he earned a Master of Architecture. Professionally, James Glassman focuses on historic preservation and adaptive reuse. Since 2003, he has worked at PBK Architects as a Project Manager. Glassman has been selected to display artwork in local group shows such as Lawndale’s Big Show and The Assistance League of Houston Celebrates Texas Art. Glassman is also active with Rice Design Alliance, Houston Young People for the Arts, and Planned Parenthood Young Leaders.

For more information visit www.amnesiahouston.org.

Amnesia Houston seeks to encourage a greater commitment to telling the story of Houston, preserving its cultural and architectural history, and supporting the landmarks that make Houston fun and unique.

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