

# hippie landing

LOVE STREET  
LIGHT CIRCUS  
FEEL GOOD  
MACHINE

by Catherine Essinger



The International Coffee Building has reached its centennial this year, but no one is celebrating. The last warehouse left standing on Allen's Landing was built in 1910 when ships unloaded their goods directly into downtown Houston.

The building's history was one of steady decline until 1967 when it experienced a rebirth and briefly became the central gathering point for an artistic crowd of Southern hippies.

The Houston Chamber of Commerce made this possible in 1963 when it created a committee to beautify the bayou and turn Allen's Landing into a park. University of Houston architecture professor H. William Linnstaedter served on the committee and designed the park with the involvement of his students. Burdette Keeland, Linnstaedter's colleague at the UH College of Architecture, and two financial partners hoped to capitalize on Linnstaedter's revitalization and purchased the two last warehouses on Allen's Landing: the International Coffee Building (sometimes called by its later name, the Sunset Coffee Building) and the W.D. Cleveland Building, which was probably constructed around 1880. They intended to tear down the older building and renovate the other into an upscale mixed-use facility designed by Keeland. The properties first housed conventional establishments like the Rio Posado Restaurant, where Keeland met with fellow architects (including Charles Moore) and business associates. One of their first renters, however, pulled them in a more colorful direction.

In 1967 artist David Adickes returned from a trip to San Francisco hoping to create a light show similar to one he saw at the Fillmore Auditorium. He opened the Love Street Light Circus Feel Good Machine on the top floor of the International Coffee Building. It was a psychedelic rock club featuring a liquid light show, dancers, and the best rock bands in the region. Patrons could dance or lay back on pillows in the "Zonk Out" to watch the show. Adickes says he considered the club only a summer project.

He sold it to Cliff Carlin in late 1967. Carlin, a retired Master Staff Sergeant in the Air Force, managed the club with his son, an architecture student at the University of Houston. As a result of this additional connection, Love Street became a regular hangout for UH architecture students. The regular performers at Love Street were legendary. The 13<sup>th</sup> Floor Elevators played often and could pack the house through word of mouth alone. Lightning Hopkins and Johnny Winter were other regulars. ZZ Top played their first gig at Love Street. They also blew out all the windows at a later show when a roadie used too much flash powder in a pyrotechnic effect. Once Jefferson Airplane stopped by after an arena show in Houston and asked if they could jam at Love Street after the scheduled band was finished.

At this time hippies were already congregating thickly at Market Square, where curious Houstonians would visit to observe the wild things in their native habitat—a form of cultural tourism that also occurred in San Francisco and Greenwich Village. The club drew them out to Allen's Landing, as well. Soon Keeland and partners were renting space to head shops that sold drug paraphernalia and other youth-oriented establishments like the Mind Mart Shop. Some of the existing venues couldn't survive the new market. The speakeasy-themed club, The Warehouse No. 1, was sometimes drowned out by the rock and roll on the upper floor. Keeland opened a gallery in the Cleveland Building called The Museum, which sold the creations of UH faculty and students. It was managed by future UH College of Architecture Dean Joe Mashburn and sold the original prototype of Doug Michaels and Bob Field's Tank Chair, later profiled in *Progressive Architecture*. The crowd in Allen's Landing couldn't afford such items, however, and the gallery closed within months. Mashburn and others remember the area becoming rough. Drug arrests in the area were reported in the local newspapers.

In 1970 Carlin closed the club to become more involved in International Artists Records. Keeland and his business partners tried unsuccessfully to revive plans for a more upscale retail area. They razed the Cleveland Building in



FROM TOP: International Coffee Building at Allen's Landing, Love Street concert, and postcard invitation.

1971, but never followed through on plans to erect a new building in its place. The Bayou City Banner lamented the destruction of the building and implied that the "hippie invasion" kept other businesses from moving in. The partnership pulled out of the property when it was no longer financially viable.

The International Coffee Building has endured forty years of neglect and now sits windowless, but otherwise solid, atop a revitalized Allen's Landing. The Buffalo Bayou Partnership has new plans for the building, however. After receiving a \$600,000 grant from the Houston Endowment Inc., the Partnership hired Lake/Flato to design a renovation with BNIM. The 21<sup>st</sup> century International Coffee Building is scheduled to become a recreational and cultural center. Like many of its former patrons, its appearance will soon bear no trace of its late-sixties indiscretions. 🚗